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IN
WARWICKSHIRE



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FRIENDS IN WARWICKSHIRE.



EATINGTON MEETING-HOUSE.

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FRIENDS
IN WARWICKSHIRE,

in the 17th and 18th Centuries.

By WILLIAM WHITE.

BIRMINGHAM ;
PUBLISHED BY WHITE AND PIKE,
1873.

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MEETINGS OF FRIENDS
IN
WARWICKSHIRE
DURING THE 18TH
CENTURY.



*In places marked with Capital Letters Meeting Houses were built.
In those marked in smaller Letters private houses or hired rooms were used.*

Friends in Warwickshire.

CHAPTER I.

George Fox's birthplace intimately connected with Warwickshire.—His youth and employments.—Visits Atherstone, Tamworth, and Coventry.—His distress of mind—followed by peace and joy.—George Fox's simple and scriptural views of Divine truth.—Friends first called "Quakers" at Derby, in 1650.—George Fox visits Friends in Warwick Gaol.—Priests at Nuneaton.—Meeting at Birmingham.—Dallif's persecution at Warwick.—Drunken Professor.—Rude mob at Dunchurch.—William Edmundson.—Sufferings of Friends in 1666.—Warwick Gaol and its many prisoners for conscience sake.—George Fox visits them.—Termination of George Fox's labours in Warwickshire.

THE pleasant midland county of Warwick is intimately connected with the early history of the Society of Friends. Close to its borders, in the adjoining county of Leicester, and at the rural village of Drayton-in-the-Clay,* George Fox, the son of "righteous Christer," first saw the light. In sight of the woody slopes and gentle uplands of North Warwickshire, and "in the heart of England," this, in so many respects, the greatest reformer of the

* Now called Fenny Drayton.

seventeenth century, was trained up by his "honest and sufficient parents" in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

It was here, "and while yet a child," as William Penn says of him, that "he appeared of another frame than the rest of his brethren; being more religious, still, inward, solid, and observing beyond his years, as the answers he would give, and the questions he would put, manifested, to the astonishment of those that heard him, especially in divine things." Here he also received, probably from his excellent mother, the few rudiments of school instruction that fell to his share; she also "taking notice of his singular temper and the gravity, wisdom, and piety that very early shined in him, refusing childish and vain sports and company when very young. She was tender and indulgent over him, so that from her he met with little difficulty."

We can well imagine the interest and affectionate solicitude with which Mary Fox watched over her grave and singular, but, doubtless, loving boy. She herself being, as her son says, "of the stock of the martyrs," he must have inherited from her that undaunted martyr-spirit which enabled him with *such* boldness and patience to preach the

truth or suffer for it according to the will of his Heavenly Master.

“As to his employment,” as his admiring biographer, William Penn, writes, “he was brought up in country business, and as he took much delight in sheep, so he was very skilful in them ; an employment that very well suited his mind in several respects, both from its innocency and solitude, and was a just figure of his after-ministry and service.” In this congenial occupation, we can imagine the young shepherd often, like the Psalmist of old, engaged in the contemplation of the works of nature, and joining with him in the exalted language, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all.” Nor is this to be considered as vague speculation, for it cannot be doubted that he who “knew pureness and righteousness at eleven years of age,” early learned to love the truths of holy scripture, and was made “wise unto salvation,” through faith in their Divine Author. It is also more than probable that the very Bible which he afterwards gave to the Meeting House at Swarthmoor was the one from which, under his mother’s tuition, he first read. He speaks in after-life of making use of the “bishop’s Bible,” and the one in

question bearing the early date of 1540, was the edition translated by Myles Coverdale, and authorised by Henry VIII. to be read in the parish churches. It is likely, therefore, that this identical book was a family heirloom in years preceding the birth of George Fox in 1624.

His master, who joined to his trade of grazier that of shoemaker and dealer in wool, found in George Fox a conscientious servant, and employed him to attend markets and fairs, where, as he himself says, "a great deal passed through my hands;" and by this means he would doubtless become familiar with the neighbouring towns in his native county, and those adjacent, in both Derbyshire and Warwickshire; places afterwards to be the scene of some of his deepest spiritual exercises, his earliest ministry, and bitterest persecutions.*

It is at Mancetter, near Atherstone, and in the year 1643, that George Fox's name is first associated with the county of Warwick. At the age of twenty, after deep religious

* I have failed to discover the sources of information from which Carlyle, in his *Sartor Resartus*, draws such a graphic picture of the manufacture by George Fox of his leathern suit; neither he or his early biographers ever mentioning a circumstance on which Carlyle comments so largely and builds so much.

exercises and seeking among many priests and professors for spiritual comfort, he relates that he went to another ancient priest at Mancetter, who, after conversing with him for some time, and ignorant of his condition, recommended him to "take tobacco and sing psalms." He adds, "tobacco was a thing I did not love, and psalms I was not in a state to sing ; I could not sing." He then went to another priest near Tamworth, walking seven miles to see him, but him he "found only like an empty, hollow cask." He next came to Coventry, to see and converse with Doctor Cradock ; and walking with him in the garden, and while intent on the conversation, George Fox inadvertently trod on one of the flower beds, at which the Doctor "flew in such a rage as if his house had been on fire. Thus," Fox remarks, "all our discourse was lost, and I went away in sorrow, worse than I was when I came."

He appears to have returned home, where he remained for a year or two, in a low and depressed state of mind, yet still zealous of good works, as may be seen from his own words at this period. "When the time called Christmas came, while others were feasting and sporting themselves, I looked out for

poor widows, and gave them some money. When I was invited to marriages (as I sometimes was) I went to none at all, but the next day, or soon after, I would go and visit them, and if they were poor I gave them some money ; for I had wherewith both to keep myself from being chargeable to others, and to administer something to the necessities of those who were in need."

In the year 1646, George Fox speaks of being again at Coventry, and how it was there "opened to him that being bred at Oxford or Cambridge was not enough to fit and qualify men to be ministers of Christ," which he says was the common belief of the people. After recording much more of the deep sorrow he experienced in his enquiry after truth, both amongst the clergy of the established church as well as the dissenting people, he mentions the latter as evincing "some tenderness." But he found none who understood his condition of mind, none who could help him. It was just at this extremity when, as he says, "My hopes in all men were gone, that then, O then I heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition ;' and when I heard it my heart did leap for joy. Then the Lord let me see why

there was none upon earth that could speak to my condition, namely, that I might give him all the glory ; for all are concluded under sin and shut up in unbelief, as I had been, that Jesus Christ might have the pre-eminence, who enlightens and gives grace and power."

Thus it was that this eminent servant of Christ, having in himself experienced the "liberty which makes free," became for the rest of his days so faithful in testifying in all parts of our own country, on the Continent of Europe, and in America, to the "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world ;" "encouraging," as William Penn says, "those who were already professors to wait in patience for the light of Christ in their own hearts, that their knowledge of God might stand in the power of an endless life. He also faithfully denounced sin, calling people to repentance, and to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." His simple and scriptural views of divine truth may be best briefly summed up by a fine passage from one of his epistles. "Live in the noble seed Christ Jesus, the anointed One, and the righteous holy One, that your minds, hearts, souls, spirits and bodies may be righteous, living in

the righteousness of Christ Jesus, in all love, virtue, truth and holiness, without which none can see God. And Christ is pure, the righteous One, the holy One, in him live ; for Christ who sanctifies the impure is pure ; He who never fell sanctifieth and washeth them that are in the fall. He who never transgressed redeems out of all transgression ; He who never sinned redeems out of sin and makes an end of it."*

In 1648 we find George Fox again in this county, where he says he met "a great company of professors, who were praying and expounding the scriptures in the fields. They gave the Bible to me, and I opened on the fifth chapter of Matthew, where Christ expounded the law ; and I opened the inward state and the outward state to them ; upon this they fell into a fierce contention, and so they parted : but the Lord's power got ground." It was in this year, too, as his experience ripened, that George Fox was enabled to say, "that when the Lord God and his Son Jesus Christ sent me forth into the world to preach his everlasting gospel and kingdom, I was glad that I was commanded to turn people to that inward light, spirit, and grace,

* George Fox's Epistles, edited by Samuel Tuke.

by which all might know their salvation and their way to God ; even that Divine Spirit that would lead them into all truth."

In the next year or two his labours seem to have been chiefly in the midland counties, though his visits to the county of Warwick from this period were much less frequent. It was at Derby, in 1650, that those who by this time were known among themselves by the endearing name of Friends were first called "Quakers," by the persecuting magistrate, Justice Bennett, and in the same place George Fox suffered his first imprisonment. It also appears that about this year, several congregations had been gathered into Christian fellowship as Friends. Amongst the earliest of these were some in North Warwickshire ; for George Fox relates, that "passing out of Leicestershire, I heard of a people who were in prison at Coventry for their religion." He visited them, and from thence went to Atherstone, "and it being their lecture day," he says, "I was moved to go to their chapel to speak to the priests and people. They were generally pretty quiet, only some few raged, and would have had my relations to have me bound. I declared largely to them how God was come to teach his people himself, and

bring them off from all man-made teachers to hear his Son : and some were convinced there."

George Fox, after an extended tour in the northern counties, paid a visit to his relations at Drayton, in 1654 ; before doing which he speaks of being "at Anthony Brickley's, in Warwickshire, where there was a great meeting ; at which several Baptists and others came and jangled, but the Lord's power came over them." There can be no doubt this was immediately in the neighbourhood of Baddesley, a village lying between Tamworth and Atherstone, in which, by this time, there appears to have been a considerable congregation of Friends.

In his own simple, yet forcible style, George Fox records the particulars of this visit to his relatives, and to the convinced people in the neighbouring towns and villages, where he encountered much opposition from priests and professors, but which doubtless tended in no small degree to strengthen the faith of the new converts.*

George Fox paid another visit to his relations at his native village the next year, 1655. This time he was unmolested ; and making

* Journal.

inquiry where the priests and professors were who, on his last visit, had opposed him so much, was told that they were gone to the neighbouring town of Nuneaton. The clergyman of that parish being dead, "there were eight or nine of them seeking to get his benefice," and adding that "they are like a company of crows when a sheep is dead, they all gather round his carcase,—so do the priests for a fallen benefice." He shrewdly adds: "It was some of the hearers of these priests that said so of them." George Fox next speaks of being again at Baddesley, where "there was a great meeting, at which many were convinced and turned to the Lord, who came to sit under Christ's free teaching, and were settled in Him, their foundation and rock."*

There can be but little doubt that many of those who attended this meeting became the founders of meetings in North Warwickshire, as a reference to the early records of the Society in this county shews that various assemblies of Friends were settled just about this time. It is clear that twenty meetings had been gathered by the year 1656 in as many miles from the birth-place of George Fox. These [meetings were soon after visited by him, for he

* Journal.

states: "I passed into Warwickshire through Friends, visiting their meetings, and so into Worcestershire." It is in the year 1655, and in the course of this journey, that George Fox first makes mention of the town of Birmingham, in the following brief manner: "I had a meeting at Birmingham as I went, where several were convinced and turned to the Lord."

George Fox visited Warwickshire a second time in 1655. He speaks of having a meeting in a widow's house at Warwick, and that "many sober people were present, who were convinced and turned to the Lord." While they were thus meeting, the town bailiff and his officers walked in, saying, "What do these people here at this time of night?" and taking the names of some present, engaged them, with George Fox, to make their appearance before him in the morning. He then gave them leave to provide themselves lodging in the inn, where, next day, they were much disturbed by many rude people who came to the inn, and invaded even their sleeping-rooms. The bailiff making his appearance soon after, told George Fox and his companions that "they were at liberty to go their ways, for he had little to say to them." Before leaving the town, however, George Fox called on the bailiff to let "him

know that the Protector having given forth an instrument of government in which liberty of conscience was granted, it was very strange that, contrary to it, he would trouble peaceable people who feared God." The rude people followed the Friends out of the town, pelting them with stones, and one dragged so hard at George Fox's horse's bridle, that he broke it. The bailiff was present during this assault of the Warwick rabble, but did not in any way rebuke their proceedings, although, as Fox says, "it was much that they were not slain in the streets."

He was next at Coventry, where he went to a professor's house that he had visited before, and found him, to his great grief, overcome with drink. George Fox records that "it grieved his soul so, that he did not go into any house in the city, but rode away to Dunchurch, and had a meeting there, and that in the morning there gathered a rude company of priests and people who behaved more like beasts than men,—for some of them came riding on horseback into the room the meeting was held in; but the Lord gave them dominion over them." After this, he spent a short time in Leicestershire, but was soon at Baddesley again. Here he met William

Edmundson, who was the first person in Ireland who had publicly adopted the principles of Friends. George Fox says that, having some drawings in his spirit, this good man had come over to England to see him, and by whom he sent back a brief epistle to the Irish Friends.

After suffering a long imprisonment at Launceston Castle, in the year 1656, near the end of it he obtained his liberty, and travelling northward, he held a great meeting at Edge Hill. "There came to it Ranters, Baptists, and several sorts of rude people ; for I had sent word about three weeks before to have a meeting there, so that hundreds of people were gathered thither, and many Friends came far to it. The Lord's everlasting truth and word of life reached over all ; the rude and unruly spirits were chained down ; and many that day were turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, by his power and Spirit, and came to sit under his blessed, free teaching, and to be fed with his eternal, heavenly food. All was peaceable ; the people passed quietly away, and some of them said it was a mighty, powerful meeting ; for the presence of the Lord was felt, and his power and Spirit amongst *them*." *Soon after this, we find various meet-*

ings settled in South Warwickshire. George Fox then visited Warwick, Baddesley, and other places in the county, in the winter of 1656, having "precious meetings."

The sufferings and persecutions of Friends in this district seem to have begun in 1656. "A poor widow, of Grendon (in North Warwickshire), had for some time professed the principles of the Quakers; for which cause only, her landlord, Walter Chetwynd, had arbitrarily thrust her and her children out of the house, throwing her goods into the street; and when she reminded him of his father's promises, that she should live there as long as she pleased, he replied, 'You were not a Quaker when my father made that promise.' And although she had been at the charge of ploughing the land, he forbid her sowing it, saying, 'if she sowed it, he would reap it.' " Samuel Smith, also, in the same neighbourhood, "was violently dispossessed of his land, though he had received a similar promise from his landlord." No other reason for this unchristian usage was given than "that he had affronted the ministers," and his landlord added that "he would see all the Quakers hanged before he would allow them to hold meetings in any house of his."*

* Besse.

The earliest notices of Friends in this county as a collective body, begin in 1657. In the first quarterly meeting minute book it is recorded in a somewhat obscure manner, that "in this year two Friends, Edward Teddes and Philip Rose, went from Hartshill on the 30th day of the 4th month, 1657, whose intention was to go to New England on the service of truth ; but what became of them was not certainly known, but by all likelihood they were cast away." From this it may be implied that these two early missionaries were shipwrecked, never being mentioned afterwards. In the same year, too, we find a record, very illegibly written, stating that "Anthony Brickley, of Baddesley, (with whom George Fox lodged, and held at his house the meeting already mentioned in 1654,) and twenty-one other Friends, whose names are also given, suffered twenty-six weeks' imprisonment for meeting together to worship God, and during their imprisonment were several times tempted to take the oath of allegiance, which they refused to do."

Following these, are many simple and brief records of the manner in which our forefathers in the truth nobly bore their testimony against priestcraft and the entire ecclesiastical system

of that day, which they had been led to regard as repugnant to the true liberty of the gospel as taught by Christ and His apostles. Some were imprisoned for not paying tithes, others for "not taking off their hats," or "for refusing to swear," so that a large number of the Friends of this county were in Warwick gaol at this period. Indeed, the treatment which Friends at this time met with from persecutors, and for a long period subsequently, was intolerably base and cruel.

In 1660, George Fox, on a visit to his relations, attended a meeting at Baddesley. While under his father's roof, it was reported to a magistrate of the neighbourhood "that he had a good horse with him:" upon which, George Fox says "he sent a warrant to search for me and my horse, but I was gone before they came, so he missed of his wicked end." From Warwickshire he next proceeded northwards to Balby, in Yorkshire, where the third national gathering of Friends under the name of a Yearly Meeting was held, and at which several thousands of Friends and other people were present; indeed, it may be said of Friends in those early days, and for many years afterwards, that at their assemblies, whether as Yearly or Quarterly Meetings, they neither

hid their light under a bushel or sought to keep the good things of the kingdom to themselves. On the contrary, such gatherings were made abundantly instrumental in spreading a knowledge of the truth, by the earnest ministry of many faithful preachers of the gospel.

The Friends in Warwick gaol received a comforting visit from George Fox in 1666, soon after his release from his own long imprisonment in Scarborough Castle. Nor can we wonder at his remark at this time, that "he was weak with lying almost three years in cruel and hard imprisonment, and that his joints and his body were so stiff and benumbed that he could hardly get on his horse or bend his joints ; nor could he bear to be near a fire, or eat warm food, having been kept so long from both." Yet, seeking no ease or rest for himself, we find him at once travelling zealously in the work of the ministry. Holding meetings in many towns and villages in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Leicestershire, as he journeyed southward, he first visited the prisoners in Leicester gaol ; and after also visiting his relations at Drayton, proceeded to Warwick to visit the prisoners in that town. He was then at Baddesley, and *speaks of having "a precious meeting there."*

In the winter of 1667, George Fox had "many blessed meetings in Warwickshire and Leicestershire," and he writes that in this year "the order of the gospel was set up" in these two counties, and that Men's Monthly Meetings were established. For a few years previous to this, Quarterly Meetings had been very generally organized. Two years after, in 1667, George Fox, apparently ever ready to follow the promptings of filial duty, again paid a visit to his relations, and afterwards to the gaol at Warwick, where, as he tells us, "many were in prison:" holding a meeting in the town, he passed on to Birmingham, and held a meeting, and at Baddesley "a large one."

During the following year George Fox wrote from London to his wife at Swarthmore, asking her to meet him in Leicestershire, most probably intending it to be at the house of his aged parents, as he had been married to Margaret Fell only a few months; but when he reached that county he was met by the tidings of his wife being "haled out of her house and to Lancaster prison again." So, turning from Leicestershire, he visited the meetings in Derbyshire and Warwickshire, and proceeded back to London, where he took counsel with

his two daughters-in-law, Mary Lower and Sarah Fell, as to petitioning the king for the discharge of his wife from prison.

George Fox was next in Warwickshire in the second month of 1677, and held a meeting at Henry Sidon's at Baddesley. He records that it was large and peaceable, notwithstanding that a justice had threatened to come and break it up. The following day George Fox was at Hartshill, at Nathaniel Newton's,* where several Friends met him, with whom he "had good service."

Early in 1678, coming out of Worcester-shire, George Fox records that "he struck to Ragley,† in Warwickshire, to visit the Lady Conway,‡ who I understood was very desirous to see me, and whom I found tender and loving, and willing to detain me longer than I had freedom to stay. About two miles hence

* Nathaniel Newton appears to have been a Friend of some property, as in an early minute book there are one or two requests from the Monthly Meeting that he should lend money to Friends who were in need; the Meeting, however, recording its opinion that "the said Friends should pay interest for the same."

† Ragley Park, close to the town of Alcester.

‡ Lady Conway was a person of great piety, and a favourer of Friends. In a letter to Dr. Henry More, who was her particular friend, she expresses herself thus respecting them:—"Your conversation with them (the Friends) at London, might be, as you express it, charitably intended, like that of a physician visiting his patients for the increasing confirmation of their health, but I must confess that my converse with them is to receive health and refreshment from them."—*John Barclay's Letters of Isaac Pennington*

I had two meetings at a Friend's house, whose name was John Stanley, whither William Dewsbury came and stayed with me about half a day.* Afterwards I visited Friends in their meetings at Stratford, Lamcoat, and Armscot, and thence passed into Oxfordshire." In the summer of the same year he had "a meeting or two in Warwickshire," after having spent some time in comforting and encouraging the Friends at Leicester "that were in prison there for the testimony of Jesus."

George Fox's last record of a visit to Warwickshire occurs in 1680. Having spent a considerable time at Swarthmore Hall, and then holding meetings in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, "I passed into Derbyshire, Leicestershire, and Warwickshire, having meetings all along till I came to Warwick ; there William Dewsbury came to me, and several other Friends, and we had a little meeting in that town. Then passing through Southam and Radway, at each of which places I had a very good meeting, I came to Nathaniel Ball's, at North Newton, in Oxfordshire." With this service closes the labours of this eminent man in connection with the county of Warwick.

* At Wixford.

CHAPTER II.

Earliest Monthly Meetings in Warwickshire.—Cruel treatment of prisoners.—Letter from prisoners to George Fox.—Filthy prisons.—William Dewsbury.—His long imprisonment.—Charity of Friends to prisoners and those in distress.

FROM George Fox's own remarks in his Journal, it will be seen that meetings for discipline were first held in Warwickshire in 1667. It was, however, not until nearer the end of the seventeenth century that the separate functions of Quarterly and Monthly Meetings were pretty clearly defined, or the boundaries of Monthly Meetings fully determined.*

It must be remembered that this "gospel order was set up" in a time of most severe persecution and when large numbers of Friends were in prison; so that until persecution was greatly mitigated at the passing of the tolera-

* In 1670 four Monthly Meetings were regularly held in Warwickshire, and are spoken of as "Men's Monthly Meetings," viz.:

Coventry Monthly Meeting, comprising Warwick, Stratford, Coventry, Southam, and Meriden.

Wishaw Monthly Meeting, comprising Baddesley, Wishaw, and Tamworth.

Brailes Monthly Meeting, comprising Long Compton, Brailes, Radway, and Easington.

Fulford Heath Monthly Meeting, comprising Fulford Heath and Henley-in-Arden.

ation act, in 1689, but few meetings were entirely able to fulfil all the functions devolving upon them. The religious assemblies of Friends were mostly held up to this time in hired rooms or in private houses.

A duty devolving largely on this Quarterly Meeting in its early days was the "care of poor prisoners in Warwick and Coventry gaols;" for almost immediately following the restoration, these gaols were crowded with Friends.

In an original letter written by a Warwickshire Friend to George Fox from the dungeon of Warwick gaol, may be discovered the sort of entertainment given by the justices (so called) of that day to an innocent and Christian people.

"Dear George Fox,

"My love flows forth unto thee in the pure, holy, and immortal life, and Friends here their dear love is to thee, and our love to all faithful Friends in and about London. There are many of us here imprisoned at Warwick, to the number of one hundred and twenty, and amongst us some women Friends; and they continue going on with their persecution still, for there were several more brought to prison this morning; and what prisoners are in Coventry and another place in this county we have not certain knowledge of the number of them, but we have heard that there is above a hundred besides ourselves at Warwick. We that are here are kept close from coming one to another. There were some of our Friends here a little time since, put into a close cellar, where they had not room to lie one by another; and one of

them being near dead for want of room and air, was brought forth very weak, and he yet remains sick and weakly. This cruelty of the persecutors hath caused a great cry against them from many in Warwick ; since which time they have removed the prisoners to a more convenient place, but they are there kept close, and there is little [opportunity] of coming to them, and much difficulty to bring us necessary things ; but sometimes it is otherwise.

“ 6th of 12th month, 1660.”

Like most other prisons in England at the time of the restoration and for a hundred years after, Warwick gaol was, as Thomas Clarkson says in his *Portraiture of Quakerism*, “ a disgrace to humanity.” Indeed, the character of the prison at Warwick down to the times of John Howard, was inconceivably bad. It was filthy in the extreme, and all classes of prisoners were huddled together in indiscriminate association. Howard, speaking of this gaol, says, “ The night room of the felons is an octagonal dungeon about twenty-one feet in diameter, down thirty-one steps ; damp and offensive ; the gaoler on going down always took a preservative.” Another writer, who describes this place a few years later, says : “ This offensive vault is eighteen feet ten inches under ground. In the middle is a cess-pool ; on the side is a stream for prisoners to slake their thirst. There is a large heavy

chain now in the dungeon that passed through a link in the chains of each of the felons, which was then carried up the steps and secured to the outer door of the vault. The only light and air is through an iron grate on the top and nearly even with the surface of the ground."

These were the dismal cells in which Friends were often made to suffer, in company with the most abandoned characters, and in which, as their sufferings abounded, their consolation did at times much more abound, so that they were often made joyful in Him who had called them to suffer for His sake, and as William Dewsbury himself says, "esteemed the locks and bolts as jewels."

It was in Warwick gaol that William Dewsbury spent nineteen years of his life, four years of which he was a close prisoner; whether in the pit or not is not stated. But it is mentioned by others to be "in a dungeon twelve steps underground, among the worst of felons, that he was imprisoned." In such a dungeon as has been described George Fox suffered his first imprisonment at Derby, in "a filthy stinking place, without any bed, among thirty felons." And still more horrible is his description of the dungeon in Laun-

ceston Castle, called Doomsdale, and of which his journal affords such a dreadful and sickening description. It can readily, therefore, be imagined what privations and sufferings the hundred and twenty Warwickshire men and women Friends must have endured, huddled as they were with felons and murderers in the filthy gaol at Warwick.

William Dewsbury being so much associated with Warwickshire Friends, in labours and sufferings, deserves more than a passing notice. This worthy man was one of the most eloquent amongst the many earnest preachers of the Society in the seventeenth century. He was born in the North Riding of Yorkshire in the reign of James I., and when quite a young man, and some considerable time before George Fox commenced his public ministry, or the people called Quakers had ever been heard of, he was led to embrace those views of gospel truth as they were afterwards held by the Society of Friends. It was in 1651 that William Dewsbury first met with George Fox, at Balby, near Sheffield. "At an evening meeting there," says George Fox, "William Dewsbury and his wife came and heard me declare the truth; and after the meeting, it being moonlight, I walked out into

the field, and they came to me and confessed to the truth." The following year he commenced his public ministry. He was imprisoned first at Northampton, and afterwards in York Castle with five hundred more Friends. In 1660, shortly after his liberation from York, with many more, by a proclamation from Charles II., we find him at Warwick, and with other Friends imprisoned there, for giving thanks after supper at an inn, which was called "*preaching at a conventicle*."* On this occasion several Friends were taken before a magistrate at another inn, who tendered them the oaths, and because they, for conscience sake, refused to swear, they were sent to prison, where, shameful to relate, some of them were detained for ten years, and were never brought to any further trial. It is evident, however, that William Dewsbury's imprisonment at this time was of short duration, as we find him in the same year dating an epistle from Newgate, from which it is plain, that gaining his liberty at Warwick, he proceeded to London only to find another prison there. He was imprisoned again at York between 1661 and 1663; and towards the end of the latter year was committed to

* Besse.

his old quarters at Warwick, where he was a prisoner from that time until 1671, a period of nearly eight years. It does not appear what was the special charge laid against him on this occasion. From Warwick gaol he wrote several epistles well calculated to quicken and confirm the faith of Friends in a period of terrible persecution and suffering. During this time he speaks of the great mental suffering he frequently underwent, from dissensions that occurred in the Society, consequent on the endeavour of George Fox to establish a more orderly discipline.

William Dewsbury's second marriage took place at Warwick, in 1667. His wife's name was Alice Meades, of that town. The following is a copy of the register :—

“William Dewsbury, of Durker, in the County of Yorke, took Alice Meades, of the Burrough of Warwick, to wife, the 17 of the 3 month, 1667. Henery Jackson, Thomas Russill, George Harris, Thos. Whithead, Nathanill Newton, John Wall, Joseph Wibbing, William Lucas, William Cockbill, Saml. Lucas, John Sheward, Richd. Lucas, Thos. Goodaire, Thomas Cooke, Patrick Livingston, Jane Eades, Katherin Jackson, Jane Goodaire, Bridget Nickols, Esther Dolphin, Hannah Whithead, Alice Eames, Mary Meades, Dorothy Taylor.”

William Dewsbury was discharged from eight years' imprisonment at Warwick in 1671, by a royal proclamation which extended to

many hundreds of Friends in every part of the kingdom. He travelled into the west of England, and in 1676 took up his residence at Warwick. Two years after, in 1678, the popish plot, as it was called, was made a fresh pretext for the persecution of the nonconformists, and many cruelties were practised on Friends under the plea of their being Jesuits. On this ground William Dewsbury was once more cast into Warwick gaol, and although the notorious Titus Oates gave a certificate, under his own hand, clearing him from that odious charge, it was in vain. He was confined there for a period of at least six years, and was at last set at liberty on a general proclamation of James II. in 1685.

Having lost his wife before he removed to Warwick, he had as his attendant a little grand-daughter, Mary Samm, to whom he was greatly attached. But in 1680 he had to endure, in addition to his imprisonment, the loss of this affectionate companion, who died when little more than twelve years of age. William Dewsbury has left a most interesting and touching account of his little relative, particularly of her last hours, and which is well worthy of perusal. Speaking of himself soon after his release, in one of his epistles, he says:

"My dear friends, through the sharp persecutions that were passed through in the heat of the day, and many long imprisonments, being nineteen years a prisoner in this town of Warwick, and four of them being kept a close prisoner, it has pleased God to suffer my health to be impaired, so that many times I am forced to rest two or three times in going to the meeting in the town, not being of ability to travel as in years past. I do in the love of God visit you in this epistle, desiring that it may be read in the assemblies of his people, that peace and eternal unity may be amongst you, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

In the last year of William Dewsbury's life, his strength rallying a little, he visited London in the third month, hoping to remain and be present at the Yearly Meeting. A sermon preached by him on this occasion at Gracechurch Street, has been preserved, and illustrates in a remarkable way his power and eloquence as a preacher, and not less the depth of his scriptural attainments and Christian experience. He was compelled by an attack of illness to give up the prospect of attending the Yearly Meeting, and returned home to Warwick, where he died about a week after, in the fourth month, 1688, and was buried in the graveyard adjoining the meeting house.

During the long period of William Dewsbury's imprisonment at Warwick, he must have come in contact with a large number of Warwickshire Friends as fellow-prisoners.

Besides the commitments already mentioned, there are existing records of many others, in which peaceable Christian people were taken from their religious meetings, or from their own firesides, on most paltry pretences, and committed to the tender mercies of the Coventry and Warwick gaolers.

In 1660, it is stated that "Thomas Winsole, John Moody, Bridget Nicholls, and Richard Eades, of Warwick, with several others, had our glass broken and our goods spoyled, and ourselves in danger to be slaine, for opening our shops upon that idolized day which ye world calls Christmas." In the same year another memorandum tells us that "We suffered about six score of us ten weakes imprisonment for refusing to swear."

About the same period, "Thomas Russell, Edward Huf-ton, Samuel Hunt, and severall others, being met together at ye aforesaid Thomas Russell's house to worship God according to the requiring of his Spirit in us, were seven of us taken out of our peaceable meeting, and required to swear, which for contions sake we could not doe, and therefore were sent to prison, wheare we remained five weeks and then were discharged from our imprisonment."

"Edward Corbett, and John Corbett, and Thomas Walker, of Brailes, were thrust into prison for tithes ye 10th day of 6 month, 1660, and George Myatt was sent to prison on ye same accompt ye 7 day of ye 9 month."

"Humphrey Boland, and John Combes, and Richard Woodard were cast into prison ye 9th day of ye 10 month, 1660, for holding a meeting at Aston, by one who is called Sir Charles Lay."

"Edward Borne, of Worcester, was sent to prison for keepyng a meeting at Over Eatenton, in ye County of Warwick, ye 11 day of ye 10 mo., 1660, being accused as a wanderer and as one yt could give noe good accompt of his businesse, though he told them whence he came and where he had been for several nights before. This was done by one called Sir William Underhill, who hath heare the office of justice."

Another instance of abominable treatment experienced by Friends is thus somewhat sarcastically recorded among other proofs of the intolerance of the days of Charles II. The names of five Friends are mentioned, "who being on the road near Warwick, having been there to visit their Friends in prison and were returning home, there met them one who is called Sir John Knightley, who bears the name of a justice of the peace, and stopped them on the highway, and took or caused to be taken from them, upon the road, goods which were their own, lawfully bought and paid for, and never returned them again, he saying they were Quakers, laying nothing also to their charge, and so brought them back to Warwick, and required them to swear, which they for conscience sake refusing, were com-

mitted to prison, where they remained about a month and were then released. This was done on the 7th day of third month, 1664."*

During the ten years following the Restoration, no part of the county of Warwick was free from persecution. At Birmingham, "William Dewsbury being in a meeting at the house of William Reynolds, a constable came with a rude multitude armed with swords and staves, who pulled Friends out of the house, and beat and abused some of them; they also broke the windows of the house in the constable's presence. The like treatment Friends met with when religiously assembled in the house of William Bayley."

"John Carkitt, Edward Carkitt, and Edward Walker were taken from their work in harvest, at the suit of William Bishop of Over-Brailes, for tithes, and committed to the county gaol at Warwick, where they were kept the first two nights in a dungeon twenty steps under ground."†

At Alcester, several Friends were forcibly dragged out of their meeting, and carried before Justice Lee, who abused them both by words and blows, and not admitting them to speak in their just defence, committed

* Warwickshire Minutes.

† Besse.

them to prison, where the cruel gaoler put them in irons, and shut them up in a dungeon with felons. They were kept close prisoners from one assizes to another, and never brought to any legal trial. In the same month Edward Bourne was taken by a captain and horsemen at a meeting at Eatington, and committed to the same dungeon, and there laid in irons.

Perhaps the sentiments of the Warwick prisoners at this time, cannot be better set forth than by the following document, written by Edward Bourne, from Warwick gaol :—

TO SIR CHARLES LEE, WITH THE REST OF THE
COMMISSIONERS SITTING IN WARWICK.

“FRIENDS,—I could have wished we had had more liberty to speak for ourselves before you, that so you might more fully have understood us, as to our practice and principles, and our grounds and reasons wherefore we may not swear, by which I am persuaded you might have received much satisfaction as to the thing before mentioned, but the keeper was forward in interrupting of us, and sending us back into the dungeon, but whether he had received any such order from you, before we came into your presence, I shall leave the thing, wishing well unto you and him, which will be by your turning unto the light of Christ is your consciences, and taking heed thereunto, that it may lead you unto all truth, that so your souls may be saved from the evil to come. Now in regard our time was short when we were with you, that we had not the liberty to clear things before you, I was free to write something in answer to what was objected, when it was demanded, whether we could swear? I answered, ‘I dare not swear, because Christ forbid it,’ who said, ‘Swear not

at all." It was objected, 'Not in your communication,' which is an addition to the words of Christ, who said, 'Swear not at all.' Now before Christ came, frivolous oaths were not admitted of, but they were to swear in righteousness and truth, and were to perform their oaths unto the Lord; but saith Christ, 'I say, swear not at all.' So now he is come whom Moses prophesied of, who is the end of the Prophets, of whom John bear witness, that Great Prophet, Christ Jesus, who is the Light and Life of men, and who fears not Him, must be cut off from amongst the people, and he saith, 'Swear not at all.' And though it was objected, that the apostle said to the Hebrews, 'An oath among men is to them an end of all strife,' I answer, 'The apostle did not bring that to make void the command of Christ,' who said, 'Swear not at all;' but the apostle brought that as a comparison to shew what an oath among men was to signify: but who come to learn of Christ, come to the end of oaths, to the end of strife, the end of contention, where glory unto God on high is given, and on earth peace and goodwill among men followeth. And so you may take notice, that what we do, we do it not in contempt of the king, or you that govern under him, but in obedience to the Lord our God, with whom we have great peace in our present sufferings, blessed for ever be His holy name, in whom we trust, and in whom we do believe that He will deliver us in the time appointed! unto whom we leave it to plead our cause with you, who is just, righteous, and holy altogether, who will reward every one according to their works, with whom there is no respect of persons, and so I subscribe myself,

A true friend unto you, who am a lover of your immortal souls,

EDWARD BOURNE.*

From the Dungeon in Warwick,
the 6th of the 12th mo. 1660.

* Besse.

In 1661.—“Thomas Goodaire, preaching in a meeting at Eatington, was taken before one of the deputy-lieutenants, who tendered him the oath of allegiance, and for refusing to swear sent him to Warwick gaol, and with him one Thomas Cooke, who in love to Goodaire accompanied him from the meeting to see the issue. At the next Quarter Sessions the oath was again tendered to them, and they were sent back to prison, as under sentence of premunire though never legally convicted by any jury. When they had been long in prison, they represented to some of the persecuting justices the hardship of their case, and, that there was a just judge in heaven who beheld their innocent cause! To this they received this profane answer, ‘*We* shall exercise the power we have on earth against you, and when you shall come to heaven, you may take *your* turn to exercise your power there.’ They continued in prison thirteen years.”*

In the same year, several men and women were taken at meeting, and were ordered to be whipped as vagrants, although their houses were known to be not far off. In 1662, Friends from every meeting in the county were in

* Besse.

prison, and all the men attending Baddesley meeting were taken at one time. Several other meetings were also broken up, as at Long Compton, Radway, and Coleshill, by armed men, who took away all the persons found there and carried them to the justices, who committed them to Warwick gaol in a dark hole or dungeon, and in which the stench was exceedingly offensive, by which many suffered in their health. One of them, Stephen Potter, being extremely weak, his wife, a poor lame woman, came with her sister to the prison to visit him, on which they were sent to the house of correction, and there whipped.

In the southern part of the county, the sufferings of Friends on account of tithes and other ecclesiastical demands were very severe. Men and women were taken to prison by dozens at a time, and suffered intensely from cold and the want of ordinary necessities. One old man, Robert Field of Easington, at the advanced age of ninety-three, had his goods taken by "distress for not going to his parish church," though it was well known that owing to infirmity he was altogether unable to leave his house on any occasion.

Accounts of money raised by the various Meetings for a Quarterly Meeting fund are to

be found, commencing as early as 1670. Kenilworth Friends in that year raised £1 15s. for this purpose ; and in 1674, sums were brought in for the relief of poor Friends in prison and beyond the seas, from nearly all the meetings, amounting to £27 10s. 8d. Another collection, made in 1675, amounting to £8 7s., was raised "for the satisfaction of William Hunt's loss at the suit of Palmer, the wicked jailer."

At the Quarterly Meeting at Warwick, the 4th of fourth month, 1675, the following memorandum was made: "For the general good of such Friends as are in necessity, Friends here did borrow of Robert Ashbury, of Warwick, £30 for one in necessity, and for which Friends in the county stand engaged."

Another minute in 1678, records an agreement of Friends at the Quarterly Meeting, that "there should be a general collection made through Friends in the county, for the purchasing of a meeting place for Friends at Coventry. Of the amount raised, Birmingham subscribed £1 10s., and Baddesley £3.

In 1685, Warwickshire Friends received a contribution from Ireland of £5, towards the relief of the many of their members then in prison.

In the same year Friends send ten shillings

from the Quarterly Meeting "for the relief of a girl in prison visited with small pox;" and every quarter at this period we find constant records of sums delivered to Friends in Warwick and Coventry prisons, indicating the great sufferings many at that time underwent, as well as the ready charity of Friends towards their brethren.*

* A collection ordered by the Quarterly Meeting in 1694 "for the relief of the poore friends in prison and beyond ye seas," produced the following amounts:—

From Long Compton	1	15	0
„ Radway	1	4	0
„ Badgley	0	10	0
„ Warwick	1	0	0
„ Easington	0	14	0
„ Southam	0	12	0
„ Wishaw	1	0	0
„ Birmingham	4	8	9
„ Fulford Heath	0	16	6
„ Coventry	0	14	7
„ Brayles.....	0	14	10
Received in all.....			£13 8 8

CHAPTER III.

The Society on its trial at the commencement of the eighteenth century.—Meetings for discipline and number of members.—No formal admissions into membership.—Many travelling ministers.—A judging spirit.—John Love's labours—Incident at Warwick and Coventry.—Circular Meetings.—Convincements.—Meeting at Balsall Street.—Appointment of Elders and Overseers.—Exercise of the discipline on offenders.—Care for younger Friends—Meetings for them at Coventry and Warwick.

ALTHOUGH the History of the Society of Friends after the passing of the Toleration Act, and during the eighteenth century, yields less of stirring incident, there yet remains much that is deeply interesting and worthy of record.

The period in question was that in which the Society, after the bitterness of persecution had passed, was put on its trial as to how far the anticipations of its founders would be realised, in the spread of its principles, and in the completion of its church discipline. They had to show to the world the fruits following the maintenance of that great doctrine of the "Light of Christ" as influencing the hearts of all men, and the necessary connection between that doctrine and the freedom of gospel ministry.

It is not difficult to prove that for at least seventy years of its history, the Society of Friends was a truly living church, and consequently aggressive in its action, and that this was to a large extent the condition of the meetings in Warwickshire there can be no doubt. At the end of this period, too, it is probable that the number of members in the county had reached its maximum of from one thousand to twelve hundred. Yet at this time the meetings for discipline were not surrounded with a compact system of either written or printed rules, easy of reference in cases of emergency, while the mode of conducting the business appears to have been singularly free from form, as it was necessarily from strict obedience to long established precedent.

It was also much later in the Society's history that the broad distinction was made between members and non-members ; all who professed with Friends without any form of "admission into membership" being equally the Church's care, whether for spiritual oversight or for relief in temporal necessity. The discipline of the Society was, however, vigorously exercised upon offenders, but not often until much forbearance had been exercised towards them. It is true the Meetings for

discipline were not so fully open to the whole Society as at the present time, yet by various means the members generally appear to have had their interest kept alive in the various duties devolving upon the Church.*

In these days, too, and for the first hundred years of the existence of the Society, there were no "acknowledged ministers," in the modern sense of the word, yet this was the time of its greatest powers as relate both to the numbers and usefulness of its ministers. At the beginning of the eighteenth century more than five hundred ministers can be designated, of whom a large number were almost constantly itinerant, carrying the message of the gospel from Meeting to Meeting, even into the remotest districts.† At Warwick in 1712, a "public Friend" travelling in the ministry, visited that Meeting, on an average, every other First-day, and the "Public Meetings for Worship," long held at the time of the Quarterly Meetings, were opportunities for the gathering together of many ministering Friends from neighbouring counties, and for

* In 1703 Friends attending the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings "are recommended to give an account in their several Meetings of the proceedings therein."

† Stabling for thirty-three "travelling Friends'" horses was paid for by Birmingham Friends in 1723.

a large exercise of their gifts. These meetings were sometimes held in the open air, from inadequate space in the meeting houses. Probably no church ever possessed greater preaching power, in proportion to its numbers, than this Society during the first half of the eighteenth century. At these meetings convictions often took place, so that in the answers to the queries frequently occurs the record that "some have been convinced so as to frequent our meetings," or, "divers of late have joined with us in our way and worship."

It appears that several out of the numerous body of ministers in Warwickshire frequently received brief certificates for service in other counties and in Ireland. They evince a warm and lively unity between the church and its ministers, and prove that the Society, as a body, still had at heart the desire for "the spreading of the truth." Accompanying this wholesome Christian labour there was, undoubtedly, at times a manifestation of a "zeal without knowledge," and it was needful occasionally for Monthly Meetings to request individuals whose zeal led them into excesses, to "keep silent in our Meetings," or, to "keep at home and mind their lawful callings."

It appears, too, that among a few a "judging

spirit" in relation to the ministry had been allowed to gain ground, and that some public opposition to ministers travelling with proper credentials was manifested, and it was this state of things that probably led to the appointment of elders to take oversight of the ministry. The following incident will perhaps illustrate this :—

" 11th of 6 month, 1706. * * * John Love liveth in the City of Canterbury ; he went through the town of Warwick preaching repentance to the people of the town, and mett with no opposition and had an evening meeting in the public meeting house of the people called Quakers in Warwick on the 7th day of the above said month, where there was a very full meeting of people of all sorts of perswasions, where were delivered or laid down the fundamentals of true religion, and so far as we could understand the auditory was well contented with what they heard, and we do hope it will prove of great servis. And the said John Love went from Warwick to Coventry where he preached repentance to the people through the streets, and had abundance of people to hear the truth at the Cross, where he got upon it to preach to the people and had a very good meeting without any opposition from the people. But some of those under profession of the truth namely M. G. and S. N. in the meeting he had in the meeting house with friends, did oppose him after meeting as if he preached fals doctrine, though one of them contradicted the other and advised him to go home, and also that he did not work to support his family, which was falsely charged upon him, as in letters sent to them may be seen, coppys of which are in my hands. He came from Coventry to Harbury where he had a large meeting, and a large meeting the same day at Warwick and was peaceable and without any disturbance. He went from thence to Stratford where he

preached through the streets, and at R. Bromley's house, and thence to Allster where he preached in the streets and the meeting house and then to Redditch."*

One of the means used by Friends for the spreading of the truth during a considerable part of the eighteenth century, was the holding of what were denominated "Circular Meetings." These meetings were held yearly, according to a plan of rotation, in several of the western and west midland counties, appointments being made of suitable Friends from each associated Quarterly Meeting to attend them. They were held in Warwickshire about every seventh year, and in successive turns, Atherstone, Coleshill, Coventry, Rugby, Southam, Stratford, and Tamworth were selected.

The usual proceeding, when the Circular Meeting was to be held in Warwickshire, was to appoint a large committee at the Spring Quarterly Meeting to select a suitable place and provide a large booth, in which the company could assemble, if the weather was unpropitious. Innkeepers were also called on by this committee and urged "to be moderate in their charges" on those likely to be their guests, and all preparations conducive to good order were duly made. The time for holding

* Warwick Minutes.

the meetings was generally in the ninth month, at the end of harvest.

From the reports given of these Meetings it is apparent that many Friends attended them, some coming from a great distance; besides which the inhabitants of the surrounding districts assembled in large numbers. In the minutes of the autumn Quarterly Meetings it is frequently recorded that they were "large and peaceable, and the people generally ready to hear the truth." The needful expenses were raised by subscription in the various Meetings, and usually amounted to more than £50.*

* 1735.—This meeting received Nathaniel Newton's account, who was cashier for this county, in relation to the expenses attending the Yearly Meeting at Rugby, whose account stands as follows:—

RECEIVED.			DISBURST.		
	£	s. d.		£	s. d.
From Birmingham ..	19	10 6	To W. Betts for rent (of land)	4	0 0
" Baddesley	10	0 0	Jno. Bradley (carpenter) 1st and 2nd account ..	20	14 6
" Warwick	8	9 6	Thatching and servants attending	0	10 4
" Coventry	17	2 0	Constables and assistants	2	5 0
" Harbury	1	5 0	Entertainment for Public friends and their horses	10	10 2
" Easington	2	14 0	John Allen and Samuel Overton laid out ..	4	1 5
			Expenses at ye 2nd meeting	1	14 0
			Cash in hand	10	5 1
	£59	1 0		£59	1 0

Divers of the Friends appointed to attend the service of the Yearly Meeting at Rugby gave their attendance, by some of whom we received a very satisfactory account concerning the same, that the people were sober, the meetings very large and much to comfort, and also that the subscriptions for defraying the necessary expenses relative thereto are sufficient.—*Warwickshire Minutes.*

Like the early Quarterly Meetings, the Circular Meetings were often times of conviction. A Circular Meeting being held in this county between 1740 and 1750, numbers flocked to it from all parts; commencing on First-day, Meetings were continued at intervals until a "Parting Meeting" at noon on the Third-day following. "Many public Friends were present, and the testimony of truth was largely and freely proclaimed to the people." Among the attenders at Rugby was a substantial yeoman, named Clark, of Balsall Street, near Kenilworth, with his wife and several neighbours. John and Eleanor Clark appear to have there become "convinced of the blessed truth," and a Meeting was established in the farmer's house, which continued a number of years, and attended by about twenty persons. A year after this conviction Eleanor Clark became a minister. It is written of her that "she grew in grace, and soon became a fervent preacher of the gospel, and travelled in the service of the truth, and was instrumental to the conviction of several, and was particularly serviceable in the little Meeting settled at Balsall Street." *

* Samuel Newitt, of Warwick, was also convinced, at a Circular Meeting, and united with Friends. He only lived five years after this, "having been an acceptable minister four years of the time." He died in 1781, aged forty-eight.

The number of ministering Friends having greatly declined in the latter end of the 18th century, and the zeal of the Church, so ardent in the early days, abating, the Circular Meetings appear to have become much less satisfactory, and these gatherings once so favoured, were discontinued about the year 1785.

Reference has been made to the disorderly conduct of some Friends early in this century in relation to the ministry ; this undoubtedly led to the appointment of elders about the year 1704 ; these were directed to meet with the ministers previous to each Quarterly Meeting. For a time these meetings of ministers and elders were kept up, but by 1727 they were either discontinued or held irregularly, as in that year one of the ministers of Birmingham Meeting brought before the Quarterly Meeting the disorderly conduct of some in that place, on which occasion the following minute was made :

“This meeting, pursuant to the minute of the last Yearly Meeting, recommending to the Monthly Meetings the appointing of serious, discreet, and judicious Friends that are not ministers, to tenderly encourage and help young ministers, and doth recommend the same to our Monthly Meetings, and that report be made to the next Quarterly Meeting what's done in that affair. And also this meeting doth

tenderly advise each particular Monthly Meeting to choose honest, zealous, and judicious Friends to visit families according to advice of our Yearly Meeting."

This subject was continued by minute for several Quarterly Meetings in varying terms. "The minute continued by the last Quarterly Meeting in relation to persons tenderly to advise and encourage young ministers, being part answered, is continued for the further answering of it." Appointments were made in pursuance of this minute in 1728, in two of the Monthly Meetings, but in the middle Monthly Meeting no such appointment was confirmed until the following year, when it was reported that they also "have chosen persons to advise and assist young ministers."

The first mention of overseers in this district occurs in 1699. At the Quarterly Meeting held at Brailes, the following minute was made. "It is agreed by this meeting that the representatives shall give account to all their meetings that they do make a choice of two honest Friends as overseers to make inquiry, or ask lovingly, the Friends that belong to their meetings, how they live or behave themselves, both in life and conversation. And when they are chosen, the names of such as be appointed be brought to the

next Quarterly Meeting, that their names may be recorded."

The appointment of overseers thus referred to, was not at that time made in all the meetings, as the Quarterly Meeting again refers to the subject in 1734, as follows:—

"It appears by divers accounts brought in that there is an omission in divers meetings in not appointing proper judicious persons to visit Friends in their families pursuant to the advice of the written minutes of the last Yearly Meeting, it's therefore earnestly desired the said advice both in that and other branches of our Christian testimony may be put in practice."

Many evidences are to be found that during the early part of the eighteenth century the meetings in Warwickshire were well settled and prosperous. Much care was taken of the poor, and the backsliding and erring were faithfully, and yet tenderly, dealt with. Thus we read that at Coventry—

"William Hodges and Samuel Nutt are appointed and directed to speak to John Brabins, in order to bring him to a sense of his outgoings in having given way to excessive drinking and frequenting of ale houses to the scandal of the blessed truth and dishonouring of Him who is its-author."

It is pleasant to find subsequently that this erring brother "brought in a paper of condemnation of his practices" to the Monthly Meeting, in which he says "he has been made sensible of his outgoings and back-

slidings, and desired to remain in unity with his friends."

Mary Marrit, another offender, is also to be spoken to by two friends, "concerning her idleness, ill company keeping, and disobedience to her parents." The venerable Samuel Overton, one of the most eminent and gifted of the Warwickshire ministers, appears to have been successful in restoring this wandering sheep into the fold again. In a paper which Mary Marrit gives in to the Monthly Meeting, she acknowledges "the tender care of friends, and that the Lord by the voice of his servants, and the swift witness of his spirit had given her a sight of her evil and wicked doings, under which she craves for forgiveness, and that friends will forbear to cut her off from the Lord's people who have shown such tender love to an unworthy wanderer."

The following letter, addressed to an offender in Baddesley Meeting, is worth recording, as showing how largely the true spirit of love must have prevailed amongst its members in 1699.

"Samuel Briggs forasmuch as thou having walked amongst us the people of the Lord called Quakers, and we perceiving thou hast not done according to the truth, and we feeling an affection to thy soul do unfeignedly desire thy return; we

have had experience of the Lord's mercy, whence our desire is to confer with thee so that thou wilt take advice from Friends in order to thy recovery, that God may be honoured over all."

Thomas Russell is sent for by the Monthly Meeting, where Friends lay before him "the evil consequences of his scandalous and vicious conduct," and he promising amendment, this meeting refers his case for future consideration.

This poor man, however, after months of faithful and patient labour, was disowned for "spending his precious time in excess and drunkenness to the great dishonour of God, the reproach of Christianity, and the scandal of our holy profession." The minute concludes, "long have we waited with much forbearance and sincere desires that he may be brought to true repentance and amendment of life; yet for the clearing of the blessed truth of Christ professed by us, we do declare that we can have no unity or fellowship with him until he shall come unto true repentance and amendment of life, which that it may be really witnessed is our sincere and hearty desire." This testimony of disownment is signed by the four men ministers of the Middle Monthly Meeting.

Many references are made in the minutes, both of the Monthly and Quarterly Meetings,

to the oversight of younger Friends, and various suggestions appear to have been offered on this subject. The following minute was made in the Middle Monthly Meeting in 1710, as one of the results of its consideration.

"It is concluded and agreed that for the good of servants apprentices and others of the younger sort, that there shall be an evening meeting at Coventry every 6th day, beginning in the 4th month, and to continue during the summer season, which said meeting is to begin exactly at the sixth hour."

A similar care was taken at Warwick by the holding of occasional meetings, in which the advices of the society were read, and much counsel given to the young in word and doctrine, "concerning both how to proceed in marriage, and, also, how every one ought to walk in a holy life and blameless conversation in all things, according to the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

"1707, 1st month. "Ordered by this meeting that there be a meeting held at Warwick for the benefit and instruction of young people, chiefly that profess the blessed truth, as well as for those who are more in years, in order to hear read the great care of the ancients that are gone to rest, and still is on those that are their successors, that those many particulars of wholesome advice concerning marriage, and other directions relating to a holy conversation may be put in practice. And also to open the understandings of the young people as the Lord may open the hearts of His servants so to do.* To be held on the fifth of the second month called April, 1708. †

* Warwick Minutes.

† Old Style.

Another meeting was appointed for the following quarter, and the holding of it is thus duly recorded.

“On the 27th day of this instant (the seventh month called September, 1708) was held another General Meeting at Warwick for the benefit and instruction of young people chiefly that profess the blessed truth, as well as for those who are more in years. It being a meeting, not only for worship, but also for discipline and good order in the Church of Christ, in which meeting was the Lord's presence witnessed, which attended His children to the end of the meeting, it being to the great joy and comfort of all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ above all the world. S. O. [Samuel Overton] opened to this meeting that it ought to be the care and chief concern of all, first, to seek the Kingdom of Heaven and the righteousness thereof, and then all other things (so far as the Lord sees meet for us,) shall be added. Also relating to the cross of Christ for all to keep under the power of it which crucifies unto the world, and baptizes us into Christ Jesus, knowing that as many as are baptized into Christ are baptized into his death; therefore we are buried with him by baptism into his death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the Glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life in him. For this cause, saith he, have I sent unto you Timotheus who is my beloved son and faithful in the Lord who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ as I teach every where and in every church. Now Paul's ways which he taught were certainly discipline and good order in the churches, which was part of his ministry that lay upon him wherever he came to preach; setting daily before them Christ, and how they ought to follow him in the self denying path. And he also reminds them by Timotheus of his ways in Christ, which the Apostle in every Church has so often preached to them, concerning Christ Jesus to be their pattern in all their lives and

conversations &c. From these foregoing precepts something was opened as a warning or call to come out of Babylon, showing that Babylon was to be found within as well as without ; but as young people as well as the old waited under the power of the cross of Christ and did truly bow to the same in them would not only discover Babylon but give grace and strength to come out of her. Yea to come out and be a self denying people, not indulging in fullness of bread, in pride or vain glory, or in abundance of idleness, but in seeking to know the truth of Christ, and in the spreading of that truth and in strengthening the hands of the poor and needy."

"An exhortation was also given by J. H. [John Hands] to those older in years ; to fathers, mothers, masters, mistresses"—

"That they do seek for life and power to train up their youth according to scripture, and the sound advice of our fore elders, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the daily reading of scripture, and that their own conduct and conversation among the lads and maids have a sweet savour, like unto our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : and that they duly, day by day, in the Lord's power, teach and admonish the young concerning the new covenant, Christ Jesus ; even as the Jews did their children in the old covenant. And that no man live to himself, but let his light shine : that he may seek to relieve the poor and the fatherless, and the widows, and in all ways to be diligent for the Lord and his truth upon the earth, that they may live in the seed that is blessed for evermore."

CHAPTER IV.

Quarterly and Monthly Meeting Minutes.—Social Character of the Meetings for discipline.—Children Apprenticed.—Representatives to the Yearly Meeting.—Ministers' Meetings.—Answers to Queries.—Advice respecting attending Meetings.—Impostors—A testimony against Robert Lawrence.—First settlement of Friends.—Richard Farnsworth in North Warwickshire.—Richard Hubberthorn in South Warwickshire.—Sundry Minutes.

SOME further interesting points in the history of Friends in Warwickshire can be gathered from the Quarterly and Monthly Meeting minutes and records; and it is proposed in this chapter to present, nearly in chronological order, various subjects, chiefly from the minutes of the Quarterly Meeting, in connection with notices of each meeting as may be found in other documents and minutes of each particular meeting.

In the early days of the Society the Quarterly equally with the Monthly Meetings, had an oversight over the poor, and the records of charitable donations were usually made in the Quarterly Meeting book. The social character of these meetings for discipline was much more distinctly kept up than at a later period.

There are some very early memorandums relating to boys who were put apprentice at the charge of the Quarterly Meeting. Thus, "John Ludford, of Henley-in-Arden, is put apprentice to Thomas Harford, of Baddesley, blacksmith, from the 25th day of sixth month, 1672, Friends paying £3 as a premium. A widow in the baking trade at Coventry, takes Joseph Cockbill, of Birmingham, as apprentice, with a premium of £6, in the same year."

1679 "it is agreed that Thomas Bryan and William Harper should go to London to the General Meeting."

This is the first record of representatives to the Yearly Meeting.

Another curious minute in 1682 is recorded as follows :—

"We, hearing how the marriage of John Greenwood and Ann Jackson is intended, Friends here at the Quarterly Meeting did freely consider their proceedings, and had not at all any unity with them."

1685, it is agreed at the Quarterly Meeting held at Birmingham, "that John Hands doth attend the Yearly Meeting at London, if the Lord permit him to go, it being his free offer so to do."*

1696. "Whereas Joseph Beasley hath proposed to have a meeting at Henley and likewise a place to be bought for a meeting-house and burial ground; ordered that the said

* "The Spring Quarter Meeting hath ever been held at Birmingham."
—*Warwickshire Minutes*.

Joseph Beasley and Francis Flower do inquire for such a place."

1698. "It is agreed that there shall be a general meeting of Friends in the ministry the day before the Quarterly Meeting at Warwick."

"1698. "There was a proposal made by Badgley Friends on behalf of Daniel Harris to have some money raised towards paying his debts, and to set him up : which was referred to be considered by every meeting in the county for a concurrence of all Friends."

1698. "John Hawkesford and Jonathan Freeth hath declared their intentions of going to the Yearly Meeting."

1699. "It is ordered that there be a collection for John Bush in each meeting in the county towards his loss by fire, which he says was one hundred and ten pounds."

1700. "This meeting appoints the meeting for ministering Friends to be held at Coventry the day before the Quarter Meeting, appointed as before in the evening, and a public meeting being on the same day at the tenth hour as usually."*

1700. "Samuel Overton, John Hands, Samuel Baylis, and John Pemberton, offer to go to the Yearly Meeting if nothing material fall out to prevent them ; and are to conclude among themselves which two are to be representatives of the county."

1700. "The several meetings being called over, the representatives gave an account that Friends in each meeting were generally in love and unity with each other and kept their first-day and week-day meetings duly, and that their poor were duly provided for, but had nothing to communicate particularly to this meeting."

"It's desired that Friends that appear at the Quarterly Meetings may attend close to the business of the meeting, and not separate until the business is over, neither to dis-

* These public meetings in connection with the Quarterly Meetings were held for many subsequent years.

course of any particular business not belonging to the meeting. Friends are desired to take notice of this."

The first record of the answers to the queries occurs in 1702 and is called "The Account for the Yearly Meeting," as follows :

1. John Ashley, present prisoner.*
2. None discharged [from prison.]
3. None died in prison.
4. No public friend died.
5. No new meeting-house built or new meeting settled.†
6. Truth prospers. Friends generally in unity, &c.
7. No signal judgment on persecutors.

1703. "It is unanimously agreed at this meeting that if there be any person that is not in unity with Friends that they be not allowed to be present either at your Monthly or Quarterly Meetings of business or give to the collection for the maintenance of the poor or Friends' affairs."

The fifth query reports in 1704, "A new meeting-house at Birmingham, one at Harts-hill, another at Radway."

1704. "Having observed some slackness in attending the week day meetings, in tender love and care for the propagation of the truth, this meeting hath thought it meet to advise that *at least one person of a family* attends their week day meetings, and an account to be given to the next Quarterly Meeting how this advice is put in practice.

"This meeting unanimously consents to assist Friends of Harbottle [Harbury] in building a meeting-house, they supposing that what they have within themselves, they may

* 1702. "Its agreed heare at this time that ther be care taken that John Ashley be removd to London by *abus scorpis* in hopes that he may be dischargd from his imprisonment and that the whole charg of the busnes is to be payd by the whole county."

† 1703. "A new meeting settled at Bedworth."

want about £14 or £15 to complete their said intended meeting-house."

1704. "Stratford meeting having no collection, Wm. Harris is appointed to advise them in their duty in this case."

Some trouble was given to the Society at this period by pretended preachers who travelled from place to place partaking of the hospitality of its members, while they were often of dissolute life, bringing Friends and their principles into undeserved reproach. Such an instance occurred in 1706, when the Quarterly Meeting issued the following paper.

"A copy of a paper given forth against Robert Lawrance."

"Whereas Robert Lawrance by trade a weaver, of middle stature, with light brown curld hair, about fifty years of age, formerly an inhabitant of Nuneaton, in the county of Warwick, but frequently roving about from place to place pretending to be a Quaker and a public preacher among them.

"These are to certifie all persons to whom he may come that he is of a bad life and a wicked conversation, having committed many dishonest and disorderly practices, and the same being proved against him at our Quarterly Meeting we have found it necessary for the clearing of truth to disown him and to give forth this paper against him from this Quarterly Meeting at Coventry ye 25 of ye 7 month, 1706. Signed, Andrew Roberts, Wm. Cockbill, Jno. King, jun., Joseph Freeth, sen., Joshua Sergeant, Richard Evetts."

1706. "This meeting orders the Friends here present belonging to the several meetings in this county to consult with Friends of their respective meetings to bring in to the next Quarter Meeting as ample an account as may be, by

whom their meetings were first settled and the Friends that first declared truth to them with all other circumstances necessary."

It is much to be regretted that only two brief records remain as the result of this inquiry; one referring to Baddesley meeting is on a small scrap of paper, affixed to a leaf of the Quarterly Meeting book, and is as follows:—

"Margery Fretwell, which was Anthony Brickley's daughter gave an account that Richard Farnsworth of Tickhill in Yorkshire was the first friend that did declare the truth at Badgley Ensor in the yeare of 1654; and he was entertained for severall weeks theare and he visited severall other places while he was theare."

The other record is in the Minutes of Warwick meeting, and states, "that Richard Hubberthorne did largely declare the blessed truth of Christ in Warwick, Coventry, Kenilworth, Alcester, and Stratford, and other places, by the space of one month, in 1660, and did gather many to the truth."

1710. "Ordered that Andrew Roberts do take care to dispose of the 20 shillings he hath received out of the Quarterly Meeting stock towards the relief of Wm. Cleeve of Little Harbury; and that he inquire of the said Wm. Cleeve what meeting he judges himself to belong to."

The first proposal to hold Circular Meetings is recorded in 1711.

1711. "Concerning the proposal for a Yearly Meeting to be held for this county with several counties adjacent it is

the sense of this meeting that the several monthly meetings ought to be consulted how it may be settled to their general satisfaction."

1712. "This meeting made choice of Andrew Roberts and John Hands to go to Fullford Heath to advise Friends to keep up their week day meeting.

The following were adopted in 1712 as advices to be read in every Quarterly Meeting, in consequence of some little disorder which had arisen, and the queries appended were those answered from the Monthly to the Quarterly Meetings.

ADVICE.

"1st.—That all Friends that come Representatives for the service of this meeting keep to the business till it be over.

"2nd.—That no Friends go apart to discourse of other things in the Meeting-house, to the hurt of this meeting.

"3rd.—That the representatives of every Meeting see that no disorderly person sit in these meetings of business."

QUERIES.

"1st.—Are Friends in unity in their several meetings?

"2nd.—Do you endeavour that the members of your meeting be of a blameless conversation, and that they which are not, be dealt with according to Gospel order?

"3rd.—Are your meetings of worship kept up on first days and week days; and, do you observe the time appointed in meeting together; and endeavour to prevent dulness and heaviness in your meetings?

"4th.—Are your collections kept up; the poor provided for, and their children kept to learning; and no collection received from any person that walks disorderly?

"5th.—Are Friends advised often to retire to wait upon God; and frequently to read the holy scriptures for the

benefit of themselves and their families ; and not to spend their time vainly ; nor in public-houses when there is no occasion ?

“ 6th.—Are Friends advised to keep to truth and justice in their dealings ; and to plainness of habit and speech ; and to train up their children therein ?

“ 7th.—Do Friends keep clear in their testimonies against tithes and church rates so called ; and keep a true record of their sufferings in their monthly meeting book that they may come in order to the quarterly meeting ?

“ 8th.—Doth any person of your meeting travel as a minister that is not in unity with you ; or is any minister dead since the last quarterly meeting ?

“ 9th.—Are the dying sayings of Friends that may be of service, taken an account of ?

“ 10th.—Are Friends advised to inspect into their outward affairs ; and to make their wills in time ?

“ 11th.—Do you keep a record of your marriages, births, and burials ?

“ 12th.—Do you endeavour that Friends know the advices recommended in the yearly meeting's epistles from London ; and are elders* chosen in your meetings, to visit Friends in their families, to see if the said several advices are put in practice ; and to advise and assist them further in any case needful ?

“ 13th.—Doth Truth prosper amongst you ; or is any lately convinced, so as to assemble with you.

“ 14th.—Have you anything to offer from your Monthly Meeting ?”

1710. “ Long Compton monthly meeting proposed to set a lad to 'prentice ; this meeting agreed for them to make

* Overseers ?

trial, and as the case requires, the Quarterly meeting is willing to be assistant to them."

1713. "Gave Long Compton Monthly Meeting towards putting Richard Harwood 'prentice, £4."

1713. "It is referred to the consideration of Friends at Fullford Heath whether they will join with Birmingham Monthly Meeting."

1714. "The next Quarterly Meeting to be at Radway on the 2nd day of the week next before Quarter day and begin immediately upon business at the 10th hour, and when business is finished to have a time of retirement together except at the meeting for the summer quarter, at which it is agreed that Friends withdraw when business is over and meet again for worship precisely at the 3rd hour afternoon."

By the following minute the small monthly meeting of Fullford Heath and Henley became part of that of Warwickshire North. The county thus comprised for more than one hundred and twenty years the three Monthly Meetings, North, Middle, and South, until the dissolution of the Middle Monthly Meeting, in 1837.

1715. "The minute of Fullford Heath and Henley joining with Birmingham Monthly Meeting being referred to this meeting, it is agreed that they join together as one Monthly Meeting."

1715. "This meeting agrees that the Friends of each meeting do bring in an account to the next quarterly meeting how and when each monthly meeting falls both for worship and discipline and also what days week day meetings are kept with what time of the day." *

* See appendix.

1717. Several minutes at this period refer to "the numerous poor Friends under the care of the Monthly Meetings," and the memorandums following, chiefly from the Middle Monthly Meeting, will prove the liberality of its members.

The widow, Sion Moore,* did lay before this meeting her desire of removing from Leamington to Warwick, and Friends seeing nothing against it, will help her as to the costs and have left her to do as she pleaseth concerning it, Friends thinking it may be to her benefit to come to Warwick in order for outward good.

At this same meeting it was agreed that all the charge that goes out of the Meeting Collection should be discharged every preparative meeting, and that everybody that payeth to the collection for the poor shall pay their proportion publicly in the preparative meeting, and also the disbursements.

	£	s.	d.
Friends collected for Widow Marrit when			
she went to London	5	0	0
For Jeremiah Robinson	3	10	0
For Samuel Harris (a fire)	17	10	0
William Smith, when he went beyond sea ...	20	0	0
Widow Lancaster's children, when they			
went beyond sea	12	10	0
For James Biggs, clothes and shoes	2	0	0

Ordered by this meeting that if our monthly collection for the poor and other uses, do not defray our ordinary expenses then that we shall advance a month's pay, or double month's pay, so as to make up the collection sufficient to answer our common expenses.

* A Minister.

William Cockbill, Tobias Edwards, and Samuel Whitehead, by and with the consent of this meeting, have each man laid down or lent unto Richard Coles, of Banbury, the sum of four pounds apiece, being twelve pounds in all, to be paid by the said Richard Coles at the end of two years, or less time, with reasonable interest. If the man that borrows miscarry, the Quarterly Meeting hath promised to help in this case.

1720. Answers to the Yearly Meeting Queries:—

- 1.—No friend in prison.
 - 2.—No friend discharged from prison.
 - 3.—One friend died a prisoner, Tobias Edwards.*
 - 4.—One public friend dead, viz., Tobias Edwards.
 - 5.—No new meeting house built or meeting settled.
 - 6.—We hope truth prospers in the main and friends generally are in unity.
 - 7.—Care is taken to put in practice the advice from the yearly meeting.
-

1722. It was laid before this meeting that Friends belonging to Birmingham Meeting should bring in next Monthly Meeting an account of the behaviour and conversation of Elizabeth Hewson, in order for a certificate for the satisfaction of Friends in Worcester.

1725. According to the agreement of the last Quarterly Meeting answers to the Queries were brought from some of the particular meetings in writing and where it is neglected it is desired to be more duly observed for the future.

1729. The Middle Monthly Meeting not having yet appointed persons to assist young ministers that minute relating to the same still remains.

* Imprisoned for non-payment of tithes to the impropriator.

1729. Samuel Overton, son of Samuel Overton, of Grovefield, in the parish of Hampton Lucy, in the county of Warwick, acquainted this meeting of his intention of going a trafficking voyage to New England, and desired a certificate from this meeting in order thereto. This meeting appoints William Berry and Samuel Whitehead to make enquiry into the clearness of the said Samuel respecting his conversation and marriage.

1730. Extract from the answers to the Queries for the Yearly Meeting:—

6.—According to the accounts brought to this meeting in respect to the prosperity of truth, we hope Friends prosper in the truth, and there is a great openness in many places to hear the truth declared. There is a care in most Friends to observe the advices of the yearly meeting in relation to the education of their children in the way of truth.

8.—Most Friends are careful to keep up their testimony against tythes and church rates, so called.

9.—Our poor are provided for by us, and their children kept to learning.

1731. This meeting having taken into consideration the necessitous case of the Friends at Coventry laid before it with respect to their overcharge of their poor, therefore this meeting orders the cash keeper to pay into the hands of Joseph Freeth the sum of five pounds for the said occasion.

The following minute of the North Monthly Meeting probably indicates that preparative meetings having fallen into disuse, were now revived.

1731. This Monthly Meeting agreeth that Friends of each meeting, do meet some time before the Monthly Meeting to consider what is to come before it, that it may come the more regularly there.

A minute of the North Monthly Meeting respecting elders.

1727. The minute from the Quarterly Meeting was read in this meeting, and pursuant to the advice there recommended this meeting appoints Nathaniel Newton and Allen Hewson tenderly to encourage and help young ministers, &c.

After 1730 no new meeting was settled in the county, except at Atherstone, Balsall Street, and Berkswell, and these were always small; and probably this is the period when some decline in the number of the members in this district commenced, as after the early zeal of the Society had passed away, and the first and second generations of Friends had mostly gone to their rest, their successors exhibited less zeal for the truth.

One passes with regret from the early days, to those which too surely give evidence of decline. This decline, however, in the Society of Friends was not confined to themselves: amongst most religious professors a few years before the days of the Wesleys, a wide departure from their former zeal was apparent, and perhaps at no other period had the nation fallen lower in morals, manners, and taste, as during the reign of Anne and the first and second Georges. The old puritans had passed away, and the comparative

freedom from persecution which nonconformists enjoyed was not favorable to spiritual growth ; we therefore find persecutors and persecuted alike settling down into a lethargic state, while drunkenness and licentiousness everywhere increased, together with a rudeness and lawlessness, almost incredible.

From 1730 to the end of the eighteenth century, are to be found the record of many disownments from the society in Warwickshire ; and while some of these were for gross departures from the moral law, and for excessive drinking and its attendant vices, a large proportion were for "marrying out" of the society.

Some of the testimonies of disownment show, however, the patience of Friends with offenders, as well as their earnest desires for their restoration to unity with the body. The following bears the date of 1731.

"Whereas, Thomas Upton, of Radford, who was brought up in the truth among the people called Quakers, but not giving heed to the Lord's witness in his heart nor to the often repeated counsels of his friends, hath fallen into excessive drinking, and keeping of evil company, and using ill words. He hath often promised amendment, but his life hath not agreed thereto, and according to Christ's rule he hath been told his fault alone ; it hath been told next to the Church, and we after long patience do disown him and his ways, until by

true repentance and amendment of life he be restored to unity again, and this is what we heartily desire."

1731. Joseph Ludford appeared at this meeting, and signified that he was very sorry for his former disorders, and hoped to be more careful for the future, upon which Friends, in tender love, with desires for his amendment, gave him good advice, and refer the matter to the next Monthly Meeting where he is desired to appear.

The following certificate on behalf of a minister of Birmingham Meeting is noticable for its brevity :—

1733. Our friend, Luke Breedon, acquainted this Meeting with his intention to visit Kent, Essex, and elsewhere ; these, therefore, may certify that he is in unity with us here, and an approved minister among us.

Signed in and on behalf of the said meeting, held at Birmingham, this 11th, 5 month, 1733.

JONATHAN FREETH,
(and others).

1734. Luke Breedon returned the certificate granted him some months ago, and gave a comfortable account of the satisfaction he had in his travels.

1734. Several Meetings in the county, especially Birmingham, being still omissive, notwithstanding the repeated desires of this meeting to appoint Friends [Overseers] to visit families, pursuant to the Yearly Meeting's advice, therefore they are once more requested to appoint such, or give their reason why, at the next Quarterly Meeting.

1735. It is concluded that the next Quarterly Meeting be held as follows :—A meeting for worship to be held on Second-day morning, and the afternoon of Second-day set apart for business, and on Third-day morning a parting meeting for worship, and that there be a meeting of ministers and elders at each place at seven o'clock on Second-day morning.

1736. The minute about persons to visit Friends' families is not yet answered, some of the Meeting's replies are that they are not furnished with such as are willing to accept of that service.

1741. The Circular Meeting was appointed to be held this year at Atherstone; a collection amounting to £55 18s. was made in the various meetings to defray the expenses. "The meeting place was commodiously fitted with a large booth, and the meetings held there generally satisfactory to Friends."

1743. Certificates of removal were not at this time, nor for a long period subsequently, drawn up in one unvarying form as at present, as will be seen by the copies which follow.

"This meeting granted a certificate to Susanna Summerland upon account of her removal to London, a copy of which follows:"

To Friends in or near London whom it may concern.

Dear Friends,—Whereas Susanna Summerland, daughter of Samuel and Lydia Summerland, of Birmingham, is lately removed from us, to inhabit with you. Now these may certify you, that upon due enquiry made upon that occasion we don't find but that she is sober and orderly in life and conversation, according to answers received from places where she has lived, so with desires for her welfare, we recommend her to your notice, as a person in unity with us, and conclude with the salutation of dear love, your Friends.

Signed in and on behalf of our Monthly Meeting, held at Birmingham ye 11th 3 mo., 1743, by Henry Bradford,

John Bradford, Sampson Lloyd, Abraham Freeth, John Williams, Daniel Lythall, Francis Howell, William Lucas, Jonathan Freeth, John Summerland, Nat. Whitehead, Wm. Reynolds, Sam. Bradford, John Freeth, Elizabeth Bradford, Sarah Gopsill, Margaret Freeth, Elizabeth Jones, Rebecca Newton, Rebecca Summerland, Susannah Morris, Ann Reynolds, Elizabeth Bradford, jun.

To the Middle Monthly Meeting in the County of Warwick.

Dear Friends, — Whereas our antient friend, Charles Lloyd, is removed from Birmingham to inhabit within the compass of your Monthly Meeting. These may certify you that we received a certificate from Friends at their Quarterly Meeting at Salop, signifying they had received him into unity and fellowship, and as such recommended him unto us, and during the time of his residence with us his life and conversation was meek, innocent, and inoffensive, with that plainness, self-denial, and moderation, as is agreeable to our Christian profession, so with desires he may finish well, and lay down his head in peace with the Lord, we conclude with the salutation of dear love, your Friends and Brethren.

Signed in and on behalf of our Monthly Meeting, held at Birmingham the 11th 5 mo., 1744, by Jno. Evans, John Summerland, William Reynolds, Elias Wakelam, Henry Bradford, John Bradford, Sampson Lloyd, Samuel Lythall, Edward Jones, Gregory Goodall, John Williams, Isaac Whitehead."

From 1740 to 1750 a large number of the most esteemed ministers of various meetings in the county, departed this life, and as but few came forward in gospel labour, their ranks were greatly reduced during the latter part of the century. In a succeeding chapter notices of some of these will be given.

1749. The following "acknowledgment" from one who had "turned his back on the truth and Friends," bears evidence of the christian care taken for his restoration.

To Friends at their Monthly Meeting for the service of truth at Warwick, greeting :—

Dear Friends,

Through the great and wonderful loving kindness and tender mercies of the Most High, who willeth not the death of a sinner, am I made sensible of my misconduct, outgoings, and great and repeated transgressions, by which I have offended a most gracious, merciful, and just Creator, and have done many things contrary to His holy will, and the blessed truth, which have not only been a heavy burthen and affliction to myself, but a great uneasiness and grief to many tender hearted Friends; in a humble sense of which I am heartily sorry for what is past, and hope, by divine assistance, to behave myself in the future as to be brought into unity with the Society, which is the sincere and hearty desire of your loving and afflicted friend,—S. H.

20th 9 mo., 1749.

In 1750 the South Monthly Meeting is spoken of as "oppressed with poor," and a contribution from the Quarterly Meeting fund is granted for their relief. In the same year a meeting-house was built at Berkswell, near Coventry.

The following is a case of somewhat summary disownment :—

1751. The Friends of Warwick have drawn up a testimony against divers persons that have walked disorderly, which was here read and approved, and is as follows :—

Whereas Jno. Lancaster and his wife, Samuel King, George Harris, jun., Sarah Vicars and Richard Vicars, have been guilty of misconduct, and broke the good order and discipline amongst Friends, this meeting bears testimony against them, and disowns them as members of our Society.

CHAPTER V.

Declension of Spiritual life — Women's Meetings — Week-day Meetings — Riot in Birmingham — Schools — Yearly Meeting's Committee — Low state of South Monthly Meeting — Increased Stringency of Rules — Deficiencies in answers to queries — Meetings closed at Berkswell, Harbury, Balsall Street, and Henley — Junction of Warwickshire with Leicestershire Quarterly Meeting — Fewness of Ministers at the end of the Century.

CONCURRENT with the diminution of the number of faithful gospel labourers in Warwickshire, many evidences can be found of a great declension in spiritual life and Christian zeal amongst Friends, after the middle of the eighteenth century; some of these are already referred to, but others remain to be noticed. With the reduced number of ministers, and the indifference of many meetings to the appointment of elders, the Quarterly Meeting of ministers and elders had fallen into disuse in Warwickshire, so that in 1753 the Quarterly Meeting recommends that the meeting of ministers and elders "be held the evening preceding the Quarterly Meeting, at such hour and place as Friends shall think most proper."*

* "One or more elders appeared from each Monthly Meeting, together with the ministers. Only one meeting was prepared with answers in writing [to the queries]. — *Quarterly Meeting, 1755.*

In 1756, in consequence of the state of the ministry among Friends claiming the attention of Yearly Meeting, the following appointment was made in reference to it.

We appoint Sampson Lloyd and John Willis, or one of them, to attend the meeting of ministers in London, at the ensuing Yearly Meeting, who are desired to answer such questions as may be proposed to them concerning the state of the ministry in our county. And by the accounts brought to this meeting it appears that none travel as a minister who are not in unity with us; and we believe that ministers are generally in unity one with another, and with faithful Friends.

In many parts of the kingdom the "Women's Meetings," had almost fallen into disuse, but they appear to have been held regularly in this county, and form a favorable feature amidst much declension in other particulars. The state of Women's meetings was brought before the Yearly Meeting in 1754, and in the following year a report was sent up to London as to the condition of these meetings in Warwickshire, a portion of which follows:—

"We have three Women's Monthly Meetings in general well attended, except when the meetings are held in country places, in which case they are usually small. The said Monthly Meetings of women have, by long experience, been found singularly useful, and will undoubtedly continue to be so, if maintained in the power and wisdom of God. They have an opportunity of giving suitable advice to their own

sex, and to inquire into, and relieve the necessities of the poor and to collect money for that and other purposes, such as schooling for poor children, and contributing to the stock of the Quarterly Meeting. Two women Friends are appointed from each Monthly Meeting to attend the Quarterly Meeting, of whom enquiry is made of the state of the meetings ; how First-day and week day meetings are kept up, and how the poor are taken care of, and advice administered as required.

In addition, there is a report of the week day meetings held in the county ; at Birmingham there were "two week day meetings, that on Fourth-day indifferent well attended, that on Sixth-day small." Baddesley and Hartshill "united in a week day meeting, which was well attended." At Wigginstown the number of members is said to be "very small." "At Henley no week day meeting. At Coventry the week day meeting poorly attended, and Warwick but slenderly attended, at Balsal Street as well as can be expected, and at Harbury no week day meeting." About this time it is reported that "there are two boarding schools in the two meetings ; one at Hartshill for teaching English, writing, and accounts, and another at Coventry for teaching Latin, writing, and accounts."

1759. A riot occurring in Birmingham in consequence of Friends refusing to illuminate

on a thanksgiving day, appointed to celebrate the taking of Canada from the French, several friends had their windows broken and other property destroyed. Among the sufferers were Thomas Robinson, Samuel Baker, John Smith, and John Evans, the latter Friend having one hundred and fifteen squares of glass broken. A collection amounting to £14 3s. 9d. was made in the Quarterly Meeting, on behalf of the sufferers.

1760. The subject of schools for Friends' children was discussed in the Quarterly and Monthly Meetings this year, and some evidence is given which proves that the children of this generation were, especially in the country places, not so carefully or religiously educated, as in the early part of the century.

1761. A Committee of the Yearly Meeting visited this Quarterly Meeting. They complain of "a declension in love and zeal, and that the communications in the ministry of some are not so acceptable to Friends as could be desired. That harmonious labour seems neglected, there being a folding up of the hands to rest. That where two meetings are held in the day, the *morning* meetings are thin, and the time not duly kept to, and that drowsiness is too prevalent, owing to an indo-

lent state of mind, void of that fervency which always attends the worship of God in spirit and in truth. In several places week day meetings are neglected altogether, and where held, not duly attended." Great deficiency is also remarked in the attendance of meetings for discipline, and " obviously in the education of children, and the parents, by example and precept, neglect to train them up in plainness of speech, behaviour, and apparel. All are not clear of frequenting vain sports and diversions and gaming, nor from intemperance. In some places, too, some have entered into subscriptions for substitutes for the militia, and such misconduct has not been condemned." One meeting was " in a state of disagreement with another." " The committee conclude with an earnest desire that Friends may be led to " a true sight of the low state of things, and not only mourn, but come into the Lord's vineyard and work, for the faithful labourers were few, and many minding their own things and not the things of the Lord."

This is indeed a melancholy picture. How different had the state of this Quarterly Meeting become from the days of the faithful John Hands and Samuel Overton, in Warwick ; of William Hodges, John Freeth, and Ann

Scotton, at Coventry ; and Luke Breedon, Joshua Sargeant, and Jonathan Freeth, in Birmingham ; and when every meeting in the county, large and small, had its earnest and laborious ministers. Now the only substitute for this bright activity and aggressive zeal was an enlargement of the body of elders and the increased stringency of the rules of discipline, while much of the time of monthly meetings was taken up with correspondence and appeals relating to the law of settlement, as regarded poor Friends.

Owing to a remissness noticed in the Quarterly Meeting in 1761, as to "Friends not duly attending their Monthly and Quarterly Meetings," some advice appears to have been given to all meetings in the county, but the case of the South Monthly Meeting expressly claimed the consideration of Friends, as will be seen by the following minute :—

To the Friends of the South Monthly Meeting.

"Dear Friends,—There was no Friend attended this meeting from two of your meetings; and apprehending that things are low and weak with you in regard to discipline, and finding a solid concern upon our minds for your growth and prosperity in the truth, we salute you in dear love, and recommend to you the following observations, whether it would not tend more to edification to hold meetings of worship at Brailes every first-day than once a month?

"And in regard to keeping up the discipline among you,

we think it proper that you hold a preparative meeting once in a month before every monthly meeting, that you may be the better qualified to transact the proper affairs of your own meeting, and to choose proper persons to attend the monthly meetings, and to appoint elders, &c. And we earnestly beseech you to be faithful in your generation, and give up yourselves to be serviceable and do all the good you can, in order to promote truth and righteousness on the earth. . . . And we recommend further to you the opportunity of holding week-day meetings where none are held, and a diligent attendance.

“HENRY BRADFORD.”

“We desire George Boone, Sampson Lloyd, jun., John Adkins, and Richard Adkins, to pay the Friends of the South Monthly Meeting a visit before the next quarter, if they find freedom, with any other Friends who may find it upon their minds to accompany them.”

1763. Friends in Warwickshire appear at this time to be increasingly careful and minute in some matters of regulation and discipline, although, according to the recent Yearly Meeting's committee, sadly deficient in some of the weightier matters of the law of Christ. Women Friends were giving stringent advice as to particular articles of dress, and from the men's Quarterly Meeting a request is sent to the publisher of Friends' books in London, “to discontinue putting any books in gilded covers, as hath of late been done.”

1766. The Quarterly Meeting hears with concern many deficiencies in answering the queries.

1767. Report is made that the gravestones in some places have been removed, and that very few are now remaining.*

1775. Deficiencies still appearing by the answers to the queries in respect to the attendance of meetings, also as to the non-observance of the time appointed, and complaints of drowsiness, which have long been matter of great concern to this Quarterly Meeting: it is recommended to each Monthly Meeting to take the same into their deep consideration, in order that some endeavours may be used with those who appear to be remiss, to incite to more diligence and a behaviour more becoming the solemnity of such occasions.

To the end of the century, from this date, there is little that is encouraging to record, except the interest that Friends in this county manifested towards the founding of Ackworth School, as evinced by liberal subscriptions.

The rules of discipline as sustained without much alteration down to a recent time, began to be put in practice about 1770 as to the more marked distinction between members and non-members. The present rules for the recording of ministers came into operation in 1773. For more than a hundred years of the Society's history the exercise of the ministry was probably much more free and the ministers much more numerous than at any later period.

The meetings of Berkswell, Harbury, Strat-

* In 1851 when the bodies were removed from the old burial ground in Monmouth Street, Birmingham, a few buried gravestones were found.

ford, Balsall Street, and Henley, were all discontinued during the last twenty years of the century, and the Quarterly Meeting of Leicester being reduced from six to only one monthly meeting, was joined to Warwickshire in 1790, under the name of the Quarterly Meeting of Warwick, Leicester, and Rutland. No meeting of ministers and elders had been held in Leicestershire for some time previously.

In 1799 only one—a woman Friend—remained in the station of minister in Birmingham Meeting, in the place of the nine in 1730, and in the whole county the number had declined to three, instead of twenty-five of the seventy years previously.

CHAPTER VI.

Union of Meetings. — The North Monthly Meeting. — Some account of Birmingham Meeting — Birmingham in the 17th Century. — First Meeting House. — Various Minutes — Baddesley — Wigginskill — Tamworth — Henley — Fulford Heath — Hartshill — Atherstone — Lapworth.

The North Monthly Meeting.

IN 1710 the separate Monthly Meetings held both at Baddesley and Wigginskill were for mutual strength united with Birmingham, and then first styled *the North Monthly Meeting*. To these were added in 1715 the Meetings of Fullford Heath and Henley; the Monthly Meeting thus comprising Birmingham, Baddesley, Wigginskill, Hartshill, Fullford Heath, Henley, and Lapworth.

BIRMINGHAM MEETING.

Except in the very earliest days, the Meeting at Birmingham has always been the largest in this division of the county; down to the year 1700, the Meeting at Baddesley probably outnumbered it. In 1697 so few Friends resided in the town that the Monthly Meeting directed that, "Friends travelling in the

ministry shall be taken to an inn, and their charges defrayed by the Monthly Meeting."

It may be assumed that Richard Farnsworth, who visited Birmingham in 1654, was the first Friend "who declared the truth there;" while in the year following, George Fox records on his visiting the town, "that several were converted and turned to the Lord." This was doubtless the origin of the Friends' Meeting in this great midland metropolis.

How different, however, was the Birmingham of the days of Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate to that of the nineteenth century, and of the reign of Queen Victoria. In the middle of the seventeenth century it was not of sufficient importance to be allowed the privilege of sending a member to Oliver's parliament; and lying off the main road leading from London to Chester, directions were given to travellers visiting the town to "turn at Coleshill." No vast manufactories, tall chimnies, or busy streets, denoted the place as one of the greatest centres of industry in the British empire. But, on the contrary, except some rude manufactures of iron, and, as Leland says, "a few loriners who make bits for horses, and a few nail makers and smiths," who chiefly dwelt between Deritend bridge

and the old church, Birmingham was little more than a country village, scarcely known beyond the neighbouring towns. Its inhabitants at this period, in their wildest dreams, little imagining that before two centuries had passed away, Birmingham with its 400,000 inhabitants would rank high among the great towns of the empire, or that its varied manufactures would be found in almost every part of the world.

The oldest place of meeting, in Monmouth Street, as well as its successor in Bull Street, were closely adjoining the site of an ancient priory, a "small religious house" which occupied the spot before the reformation, and whose existence might have been forgotten, did not the name of an adjoining street call it to remembrance.*

The busy thoroughfare so long identified with the "Quaker's Meeting House," was then a sandy lane outside the town, and it needs but little imagination to picture a landscape, as viewed from its vicinity, not unlike, or inferior in beauty to that to be seen in close proximity to the little country meeting house

* The modern "religious house," (the Priory school,) on or near the same site, is most likely doing as much for the general and religious good of the public of the nineteenth century, as ever its predecessor did in its palmiest days.

at Hartshill. Looking north, the hill would slope away in gentle undulations to Hockley woods; its brook flowing in freshness and purity, and widening into a considerable sheet of water, called Hockley pool. The gables and roofs of the newly-erected Aston Hall would be seen with the church spire a little more to the right, and behind would rise, beyond the windings of the Tame, the "gravelly hill," and the bare and bleak heath on which Erdington now stands, and known as the Coldfield; while the background would be filled up by the tower of Sutton church, the woods of its spacious park, and the long-backed eminence of Barr Beacon. Looking due east, the most distant objects were the Meriden hills, half way to Coventry, and nearer, the gentle eminences crowned by the semi-castellated mansion of Castle Bromwich; and in the foreground the valleys of the Rea and Tame, "the way to Coleshill," now Coleshill Street, and the shady trees of the "Dale End." South-west and south, would be seen portions of the upper part of the town, the spire of St. Martin's, and rising above the trees of the cherry orchard, the homely turret crowning the roof of King Edward's School, which had been founded then upwards of a hundred

years, but which still stood on the edge of the town.* The woods of Bordesley park, overlooked by the suburban Park Street, and bounded by the quaint gabled houses of "Deer-gate-end," would complete the picture.

But few regular meeting houses were built previously to the passing of the toleration act, in 1689, and none existed in Warwickshire until after that time.

The house of William Reynolds, as mentioned in a former chapter, must have been one of the earliest places of meeting for Birmingham Friends, the first notice of whom is to be found in *Besse's Sufferings*, as follows: "1659, William Heath had his goods taken for tithes," and in the following year it is stated that "Daniel Baker kept a meeting in William Baylis' house, and John Cotterill, the constable, and one of the high sheriff's servants, came with a rude multitude, and took Friends out of the house, and some were much beaten and bruised, the constable giving encouragement thereto."

The original meeting house, in Monmouth Street—probably not built especially for the purpose—needed frequent repair. It became

* The "New Church," as it was called, (St. Philip's,) was not built for some years after the time we are speaking of.

so dilapidated that in 1703 a new meeting house was erected in Bull Street, within a stone's throw of the old one. This building was, during the eighteenth century, subjected to several enlargements, various alterations being made, down to the period of its removal in 1857, in which year the present spacious meeting house was opened.

The following minutes contain the only details to be found relating to these two meeting houses.

1702. Friends are desired by this Meeting to come together next Fourth-day to consult about building a meeting house.

1702. Abraham Heath, Jonathan Freeth, Thomas Rose, and Sampson Lloyd, are appointed to see what Friends that have not subscribed, are willing to give toward building the meeting house, and to collect the whole. This meeting allows two-and-sixpence for the carpenters now at work in the meeting house.

1702. This Meeting orders that the new meeting house walls be wainscotted with deal boards.

1703. Jonathan Freeth, jun., and John Hawkesford, are appointed to consult with a workman the charge of putting the [old] meeting house into a dwelling house, and give an account to the next meeting.

1704. John Pemberton, and Sampson Lloyd are appointed to view the draught of the settlement of the new meeting house and advise with some lawyer about it.

1703. The new meeting house was opened about the middle of this year, and no doubt

at this period the upper end of Bull Street was quite outside the town; a few scattered buildings at its lower end probably existed. Behind it was a burial ground (that portion now in front of the present meeting house,) which, with that in Monmouth Street, were both used for interments until the middle of the eighteenth century, when the latter ground was no longer used. Early in the present century the plot of land bounded on two sides by the present meeting house and the Priory school, was purchased for the enlargement of the burial ground.*

The minutes relating to the affairs of Birmingham Friends begin with 1693. For some time after this the various meetings in the neighbourhood appear to have acted more independently of each other in matters of discipline and relative to marriage and care of the poor, than at a later period, when the duties of Preparative and Monthly Meetings were more clearly defined. The following, though denominated Monthly Meeting minutes, refer almost exclusively to the affairs

* An Act of Parliament compelling a sale of the old burial ground, in Monmouth Street, to the Great Western Railway Company, the remains of upwards of 300 interments were removed, and reinterred in the Bull Street burial ground in 1851. The spot was exactly opposite the present Great Western hotel.

of Birmingham Friends. The very first to be found evinces their care for the poor :—

1693. After a proposal was made to the meeting for settling a collection towards ye relief of ye poor and defraying other charges relating to the affairs of ye church, it was unanimously agreed unto, and ordered that also those Friends yt are judged fit and willing to contribute towards this collection, may have their names writ down and what they are willing to give monthly inserted in ye next column, and after that twelve other columns for ye orderly setting down each month what is collected. All which money so collected is ordered to be paid to Abraham Heath, sen., or Thomas Rose, in order yt they may disburse it as the meeting shall direct in ye uses aforesaid.

1693. The condition of widow Cotterill of King's Norton, is to be considered of until next Monthly Meeting, and then to be relieved as Friends in the mean time shall find her necessities to require.

1693. Friends are desired to bring in the account of their sufferings to the next Monthly Meeting, and they are also to meet early on ye 1st day before ye Monthly Meeting and yt Friends' yearly paper be read at yt time, and at ye Monthly Meeting.

1693. It is ordered that ye Widow Cotterill shall have three shillings and sixpence per week allowed for ye relief of herself and children, until the child is recovered of its sickness or some further care taken of it.

1694. The case of Hannah Gooldingal being supposed to be necessitous, this meeting doth order Robert Ratherham to take her from this meeting half-a-crown.

1695. This Meeting doth allow the Widow Cotterill a waggon load of coals, and also appoints Robert Ratherham to bring them for her.

1695. This meeting having considered the great inconveniency of the slackness of some Friends in not coming

in due time to the week days meeting, doth order and appoint that Friends come duly at the 10th hour in the morning.

Further concluded that hereafter on each first-day we have two meetings, the morning meeting to begin at the 9th hour, and the afternoon meeting to begin at the 1st hour.

1695. For the more conveniency of the management of business that may occur in each meeting, this meeting doth advise, that as there is already a monthly meeting for business settled both at Fullford Heath and Wigginshill, yet so as they may have recourse to our meeting as they shall hereafter think fit.

1696. This Meeting hath concluded that the Widow Cotterill's son Joseph shall be put forth apprentice unto Thomas Hawkesford * * * * Also the Meeting doth consent to give with him five pounds, but his master to take him with such clothes as he hath.

1696. This meeting hath ordered that this Meeting and Fullford Heath be united for one monthly meeting of business, and that the said monthly meeting be kept here at Birmingham one month, and at Fullford Heath another month.*

1697. Abraham Heath, sen., and Thos. Rose, are appointed to take care to keep turbulent persons from disturbing this meeting, more especially Richard Wilson, who hath been very troublesome some meetings past.

1697. Upon consideration of the many travelling Friends who come hither on the Fifth-day of the week, and by appointment have meetings on the Sixth; it is left unto Friends to consider whether it will not be convenient to have a meeting fixt on Sixth-day.

1697. It was concluded that for the future, there be a meeting duly kept on the Sixth-day of the week, to begin at the tenth hour in the morning.

1697. This meeting doth order Abraham Heath, the elder, and Richard Chandler, to take notice that Friends

* This arrangement does not appear to have been carried out until 1715.

come in due time both to the First and week-day meetings, and to admonish those that hereafter may come late to the meeting.

1698. Abraham Heath is appointed to speak next First-day to Friends that they gather to the meetings at the tenth hour as formerly advised.

1701. John Hawkesford and John Pemberton are appointed by this meeting to advise Widow Brayle to take care to pay Sarah Reynolds, to prevent further trouble, and to give their report to the next meeting.

1701. This meeting agrees that John Hunt shall have fourpence per week, and eightpence per week for other necessities. Joseph Farmer is appointed to go to John Wall and pay him for what bread he hath had, and give him orders for the future.

The care of the poor continued to be diligently attended to, as both the minutes and cash accounts of the end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries fully prove. Many of these extracts which follow are of an interesting character, and illustrate some of the customs of the earlier days of the society, as well as affording an idea of the prices of articles of clothing and other matters supplied to poor Friends.

1694. Paid for a pair of shoes, to Tobias Edwards, for John Hunt, 3s. 6d.

Paid for flannel cloth to mend John Hunt's clothes, 4s. 4d.

Paid for coal at the quarterly meeting, 4d.

Paid for a flag besom to sweep the meeting house, 4d.

Given to Jno. Steward, of Deritend 1s. Cutting down weeds and nettles in the burial ground, 6d.

Paid for writing two notes to Samuel Lay and Abraham Heath, 3d.

Paid for two Friends' horses for their meat, 7d.

Paid for horse hire, for Abraham Heath to go to Warwick, 2s.

Paid for new clothes for John Hunt, his own not 'being decent, 16s.

Paid to John Murdock, for hay and oats, for twenty-one *Friends' horses, and shoeing by me, John Rose, £1 10s. 5d.

Paid for the shroud and making grave for John Cotteril, of Balsall Heath—he being a poor man, 3s. 10d.

Paid to a boy that was travelling to Nottingham, to his father, and Friends ordered me to give him 1s.

1695. Set the house in the new row to Thomas Yates, stock lock maker for his son at £3 10s. 8d. per year.

Waggon load of coal for widow Cotteril, 14s. 6d.

To A. Heaton, of Castle Bromwich by order of Friends, and paid in all this year to him to go along with Friends that came to us on truth's account, £1 4s. 6d.

Horse block at Meeting house, 4s.

Pair of leather breeches for Edward Marlow, 2s.

For widow Jeffries' coffin, 5s.

Isaac Blackham for tending the school boys, three quarters 7s. 6d. [in meeting.] Ditto to him for four times bidding † Friends of strangers coming, 2s.

Pair of stockings for a poor friend, 1s. 4d. ; two shirts, 5s. 4d.

Mending windows, 1s. 4d.

One lb. candles, 3d.

Nursing Widow Ault and making her grave, 5s.

Surgeon, for curing E. Marlow's finger, 17s. 6d.

Beer at sundry times for travelling Friends, 9d.

* For Friends travelling in the ministry.

† Giving notice of public meetings.

To John Lewis for coat, waistcoat, and breeches, for Edward Marlow, 16s.

Paid for 52 weeks sweeping the street before the meeting house, 8s. 8d.

Gave Nathan Heath, for the old folks, 2s. 6d.

Paid for Benjamina Padley's horse, charges for five nights 5s. 8d., and for doctor's stuff she had, 3s., and towards her going to Worcester, she being very poorly, 3s.

Paid Matthew Cox for setting Richard Francis' daughter's leg, £2 5s. od.

Paid for a quarter's sweeping at Meeting House, 2s.

The times of holding meetings for worship were frequently changed. In 1703 the First-day morning meeting, was fixed "at half-an-hour after the ninth hour," at ten on Fourth and at two on Sixth-days, and the following minute settled the hour for the afternoon meeting on First-days.

"This meeting orders that Friends gather by the first-hour in the afternoon for the conveniency of country Friends, who have made complaint of the inconveniency of the meeting, being continued so late as it is usually."*

Scarcely a Monthly meeting passed for the first thirty or forty years of the eighteenth century, without a "proposal of marriage." It was necessary also, that the parties should "appear a second time," before they were left at

* At this date Friends belonging to Birmingham, meeting were resident at King's Norton, Solihull, Castle Bromwich, Harborne, Smethwick, Moseley, Yardley, Halesowen, Hall Green, and Beech Lanes.

liberty to accomplish the marriage "according to the good order of truth." In 1704 the following minute was made :

"This meeting orders that such Friends as hereafter are to be married, sit in the gallery, and there to take each other, as being thought convenient to prevent the usual disorder !"

Although the country meetings were not at this date fully united with Birmingham in matters of discipline, its assistance was often asked in cases of difficulty, as will be seen by the next extract.

1707. Our Friend Nathaniel Newton having given this meeting account of some disorderly persons at their meeting at Baddesley, and desired the advice of this meeting, and also the assistance of some of this meeting to go there to examine matters, this meeting have appointed Jonathan Freeth, John Hawkesford, and Samuel Stretch, to attend next Monthly meeting at Baddesley to assist in the matter.

1707. The Friends appointed to go to Baddesley meeting, to assist Friends gave this meeting an account that the person concerned in disorderly walking, did not much acknowledge their misdemeanours or that they had done much amiss.

1708. This meeting appoints Edward Marlow to have a coat and waistcoat.

1709. At our Monthly meeting, 9th 1st month, nothing material proposed, nor for the next month nothing material.

The immediate cause of the junction of Baddesley and Wiginshill meetings with that of Birmingham, in 1710, appears to have been the continued "disturbances" in Bad-

desley meeting by an individual whose preaching was not acceptable, and by another who became his partizan. Nathaniel Newton and Samuel Nickson being appointed to "ask for help from Friends of Birmingham Meeting," the following minute was the result :

"Memorandum, that this twelfth of 5th month, 1710, Friends of Badgley and Wigginsall meetings being present, it was then agreed and concluded by them and Friends of Birmingham, that for the greater service of truth and assisting each other's meetings, the said three meetings of Birmingham, Badgley, and Wigginsall do join together to make up one Monthly Meeting. The first Monthly Meeting being kept here at Birmingham this present instant ; the next Monthly Meeting to be the second Fourth-day in ye next month, at Badgley. The next Monthly Meeting after that at Birmingham, and ye next at Wigginsall, and so to continue from month to month, to be six Monthly Meetings in the year at Birmingham, and six at Badgley and Wigginsall, in the same order as before mentioned."

The above arrangement necessitated the establishment of Preparative Meetings in the three meetings ; that in Birmingham was commenced in ninth month, 1710.

"This meeting hath agreed yt there be held here at Birmingham every first Fourth-day in each month, as a Preparative meeting for our particular business."

These meetings appear soon to have fallen into disuse or to have been very irregularly held until their recommencement in 1731, since which date regular minutes have been kept.

"Meetings for young people" similar to those referred to in a former chapter, were appointed to be held in 1712 in the three meetings; "designed to strengthen them in a growth in the blessed truth, and to inform them of our testimonies, and to come out, and to separate from an ungodly world, its works and ways, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit according to the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

For a considerable period following the consolidation of the North Monthly Meeting, very few minutes were recorded, except those relating to marriage, and an occasional "testimony of disownment" against "disorderly walkers," or of a special gift to a poor friend, briefly noted thus :—

1725. This meeting orders two guineas to be given to Mary Harrison, widow.

About the year 1730 several disownments took place in Birmingham meeting, sometimes on account of "mixed marriages," but more frequently for drunkenness and "disorderly walking contrary to truth's leadings." One of these testimonies of disownment contains the following truly Christian sentiments.

* * * * *

"Notwithstanding the Christian care and endeavours that hath been used by the said people called Quakers, according

to the good order prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ, recorded in Matthew xviii. 'Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone, and if he shall hear thee thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church, but if he neglect to hear the church let him be to thee as an heathen man and a publican.' But * * * * hath continued his wicked and disorderly practices to the dishonour of truth, and bringing a reproach on the said people. Therefore, according to the advice of the Apostle (Romans xvi.), 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them.' So we do disown the above named, and in no respect own him as a member of or in our community: heartily desiring the Lord may so touch his heart, that he may see his outgoings, and come to sincere repentance for the same."

It was a common practice in these days for the Monthly Meeting to require delinquents to attend, that they might be admonished before steps were taken for their disownment; one minute on such an occasion runs thus:—

"At our Monthly Meeting held at Badgley, 12th of 6th month, 1730. Joseph Ludford appeared at this meeting, and upon conference with him, things not appearing so well as Friends could desire, they in love gave him good advice and desired his amendment, and also suspend further proceedings till the next Monthly Meeting happens at Badgley."

The number of Friends travelling in the ministry who visited Birmingham meeting was very considerable at this period. A list

was supplied at every quarterly meeting of such visits to each particular meeting. A careful record was for many years made in Birmingham meeting of "Visits from Public Friends," extending from 1726 to 1810. So vigorous was the itinerancy of the ministers of the society in the first thirty or forty years of the eighteenth century, that few First-days passed without the presence of one or more of these devoted labourers in Birmingham meeting. In 1730, thirty-four such visits were paid; at the end of the century the average number had fallen to about twenty.

The minutes of Birmingham Preparative Meeting, beginning with 1731, contain very little of historic interest. With the increasing population of the town, the number of Friends also somewhat increased; and as in the present century, so in the eighteenth, more by the influx of Friends from other places than by the natural increase of the older families. Many of the descendants of these left the society, so that at the close of the eighteenth century only the names of Lloyd, Freeth, Baker, and Evans, are to be found as the representatives of the Friends connected with meeting in the early part of the century. "The account of the Birmingham collection for the

National Stock in 1740," probably furnishes the names of the principal families at that time,* viz. :—

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.	
Sampson Lloyd ...	1	1	0	John Crowley ..	0	2	0	
Joseph Farmer ...	1	1	0	James Brittle ...	0	4	0	
Thomas Pemberton	1	1	0	Isaac Whitehead ...	0	4	0	
Joshua Sargeant ...	0	10	6	James Stretch ...	0	2	6	
Charles Lloyd ...	0	10	6	Henry Bradford ...	0	10	6	
Thomas Pritchard	0	15	0	Hannah Pemberton	0	10	6	
Joseph Murdock ...	0	10	6	Isaac Newton ...	0	5	0	
Abraham Freeth ...	0	10	6	Jonathan Freeth ...	0	5	0	
Edward Jones ...	0	5	0	Sampson Freeth ...	0	5	0	
Elias Wakedam ...	0	5	0	John Banbrook ...	0	2	6	
John Bissill ...	0	5	0	John Wakeman ...	0	2	6	
John Williams ...	0	5	0	John Evans ...	0	4	0	
David Freeth ...	0	5	0	Isaac Suffolk	}	0	10	0
John Mason ...	0	5	0	Wm. Baker				
Margaret Freeth ...	0	10	6	Wm. Millington				
John Hawkesford...	0	5	0					

The Meeting-house erected in 1703, was in need of substantial repairs seventy years afterwards, and owing to the increased traffic and noise, the windows on the Bull Street side were ordered to be bricked up in 1773, and "handsome arched sash-windows" took the place of the small and dilapidated casements on the side next the burial ground. The roof was also repaired, a gallery built at the south

* At this date, Friends belonging to Birmingham Meeting were resident at King's Norton, Solihull, Castle Bromwich, Harborne, Smethwick, Hall Green, and Green Lanes.

end, and the whole substantially panelled with oak.

In 1778 it became necessary to enlarge the meeting house, and some additional accommodation was also added to the women's meeting-room. During the alteration the meetings for worship were held "at the hotel assembly-room," for the use of which the sum of eight guineas was paid.

The preparative meeting minute which follows relates to this alteration :—

1778. The following Friends are appointed as a committee to agree to and superintend the alterations of the meeting house, viz. : Samuel Galton, Samuel Galton, jun., Richard Dearman, Sampson Lloyd, jun., Thomas Robinson, Samuel Baker, and Thomas Beddoes. And it is desired that that they would forthwith set on foot a subscription among Friends for defraying the expense, which it is computed may amount to about £300.

The total amount expended was £587 19s. 6d., but other alterations were soon required, so that in 1792 the subject was again brought under notice by the following minute :

1792. The Friends appointed to consider of the proposed alteration of the meeting house* proposed that the seats under the ministers' gallery be elevated a step, and an additional seat set before it, and the seats in the upper gallery be elevated eight and a-half inches each from the front, which the

* A proposal was made to build a new meeting house in 1806, but a further enlargement was made instead, and these alterations were continued almost every ten years until the building of the new meeting house in 1857.

meeting approves and desires may be carried into effect ; and we recommend the Friends who are members of the meeting of ministers and elders to sit in the ministering Friends' gallery.

Membership in the society was not very clearly defined even in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and owing to the misconduct of some who claimed a birthright with Friends, a committee was appointed in 1779 to consider these cases, on behalf of the monthly meeting.*

This committee, with an addition to its numbers, continued their services for several years ; its special object will be seen by an extract from their records.

“ BIRMINGHAM, 12th 10 month, 1779.

Most of the Friends appointed as a committee by the last monthly meeting to take under consideration the cases of such who may have pretensions to membership with Friends, but are not of a conduct thoroughly orderly, attended this day at the house of Joseph Gibbins, according to appointment.”

Many cases came under their notice. A mother and daughter having both married out of the society, were “ never fully disowned,” and so were considered “ as having a claim for relief.”

* The names of the committee were Sampson Lloyd, Joseph Bructon, Joseph Robinson, Thomas Robinson, William Fowler, Samuel Galton, Charles Lloyd, John Evans, Samuel Lythall, Sampson Lloyd, jun., Richard Dearman, and Samuel Baker.

"Widow Keeling married out of the society, and don't find she has been dealt with. Is a very respectable and industrious woman, and has brought up her children commendably, who mostly attend our First-day meetings."

"D. L. has married a second wife, and she not of our society, and it is feared he is not of orderly conduct."

"J. D. has been in the militia, and but rarely attends meetings."

These were the kind of cases which occupied the care of the committee. A very few were brought back into unity with Friends, and the others appear to have been ultimately disowned. The committee was not finally discharged until 1797. Its concluding minute recommends the "recognition in membership" of several young persons, either on the ground of convincement or of birth and education in the society.

BADDESLEY MEETING.

THE parish of Baddesley Ensor,* sixteen miles from Birmingham, is pleasantly situated on elevated ground, about midway between the towns of Tamworth and Atherstone, and just off the Roman Watling Street. At the time George Fox and Richard Farnsworth

* Invariably spelt *Badgley* in the early minutes.

first "declared the truth there," its sparse population were almost wholly engaged in agricultural pursuits. Among them, in this and the neighbouring parishes, were numerous substantial yeomen, owning and cultivating their own freeholds; and, as in other parts of the country, it was from this class that the Society of Friends drew many of its earliest and best members. Anthony Brickley was one of these, and who has already been referred to in a former chapter as among the first who received the truth under the preaching of George Fox in 1654. And in 1655, at the "great meeting" he held at Baddesley, many other persons "came from far to it, and were convinced and turned to the Lord."

In 1660 the meeting was probably the largest gathering of Friends in the county; its members living scattered in many neighbouring towns and villages, in several of which meetings were afterwards established. Down to the end of the seventeenth century members of Baddesley meeting were living at Tamworth, Polesworth, Hartshill, Atherstone, Grendon, and Baxterley; and until the building of the meeting house, the farm kitchens and orchards of Anthony Brickley, Henry Siddin, and Nathaniel Newton were succes-

sively the places of meeting of the gathered church.

There are but few records of this once flourishing meeting, and the memorandums that remain are scattered among cash accounts and birth and marriage registers. The first is "a paper sent to Samuel Briggs by Henry Siddin," viz.:—

"Samuel Briggs, forasmuch as thou having walked among us, the people of the Lord cal'd Quakers, and wee perceiving thou hast nott don according to the truth, and wee feeling an affection to thy soule doo unfeignedly desire thy return and have experience of the Lord's mercy. Wherefore our desire is to confer with thee, or that thou wilt take advice from Friends in order to thy recovery, that God may be honoured over all.

From our monthly meeting, the 18th of Twelfth month, 1679-80.

MARMADUKE SIDDIN.	DANIEL HARRIS.
HENRY SIDDIN.	JOSEPH AULT.
RALPH TAYLOR.	WILLIAM BALDWIN.
ROBERT MEEKE.	EDWARD BRADFORD.
NICHOLAS JUXON.	

Following this are records, showing, as in other meetings, the care of the poor, and in that time of persecution, the continued relief given to "prisoners for the truth at Warwick." There is evidence, too, of a meeting-house in existence previous to the erection of the present building, as found in "a record of what money hath been collected amongst Friends

for ye reliefe of Friends yt had need." In this it is written that in 1679—

"There was payed to John Barfoot, towards the repaire of the meeting-house, £1 6s. 6d.

"And there hath been disbursed by Nathaniel Newton, for friends at severall times about the house and bareing-place, £3 4s. od."

Some other brief memorandums follow in the Baddesley records, nearly all evincing the charitable disposition of the early Friends.

1698. Pay'd Thomas Baldwin, towards his rent, 5s.

1699. Collected for the poor of the parish, owing to the dreadful fire, £2 15s. 6d.

1699. Given for bread for the poor, 10s.

1701. Given a poor stranger at meeting, 6d.

1705. Pay'd towards T. Cole's burying, 7s.

In the midst of cash accounts is a memorandum made a year or two previously to the union of Baddesley, Birmingham, and Wigginsill as one monthly meeting, which is as follows :—

"Ye 26 of ye 1st month, 1707.

"It was agreed at ower Monthly Meeting at Badgley, upon notis given to Burmingham and Wigginsal upon any extraordinary bissness that this meeting thinks itself not so-fishant to determine, and wee likewise upon notis do promise to meet either of them meetings if they have occasion."

Notwithstanding the erection of the several meeting-houses of Tamworth, Hartshill, and Atherstone, during the first half of the eighteenth century, the meeting at Baddesley

maintained its numbers down to about 1750, after which a considerable decline took place, and at the end of the century there were but few Friends remaining. Meetings were finally discontinued in the year 1836, and for a considerable period the meeting-house has been let to the Methodists; Friends having, however, the liberty of holding meetings in it as opportunity serves.

HARTSHILL MEETING.

Hartshill is a pleasantly situated village, about a mile from the Roman Watling Street, which here forms the boundary between the counties of Warwick and Leicester. It is three miles from Nuneaton and about the same distance from Fenny Drayton, the birthplace of George Fox. Hartshill being placed on an eminence, commands both beautiful and extensive views of the surrounding country, including much fine corn and pasture land, rich woodlands and gentle eminences, and thickly interspersed with towns and villages.

The increasing number of Friends in North Warwickshire at the beginning of the eight-

eenth century led to the establishment of a meeting in this village, that at Baddesley being between three and four miles distant. Part of a barn, given by Nathaniel Newton in 1704, was first used as a meeting-place. A new meeting-house was built in 1720; this was destroyed some years later in a riot, of the origin of which no records remain. By collections, made in this and the neighbouring Quarterly Meetings, the present building was erected about 1740.

Although the meeting at Hartshill was never large, and formed with Baddesley a joint preparative meeting, it included several families of Friends, chiefly engaged in agriculture, among whom were persons of great worth of Christian character. The names of the Newtons, Lythalls, Fowlers, Rathbones, and Crosfields were some of the most prominent in connection with this meeting during the eighteenth and earlier part of the present century. Like all the country meetings in Warwickshire, it greatly declined in numbers, and during the first thirty years of the present century its "weak state" often called for the care of the monthly meeting until its discontinuance in 1838.

After having been closed for more than

thirty years, some Friends in Birmingham, in conjunction with the late Edward Brewin, of Leicester, felt desirous of holding a meeting for worship in the old meeting-house at Hartshill. It was found, on inspection—although ivy-clad and picturesque exteriorly—to be scarcely tenantable within ; but a little repair and cleaning being effected, a comfortable and profitable meeting was held, which was largely attended by the inhabitants. Several other meetings were held at various intervals, by the approval of Monthly Meeting, chiefly under the care of Friends from Birmingham ; and these being more or less well attended by the inhabitants, on the settlement of a member of the society to take charge of the school adjoining the meeting-house, it was again regularly opened for divine worship twice on a First-day in 1869. Some of the attenders have recently united in membership with the society, and the meeting at Hartshill has again become the centre of social and Christian influences in the village.

The SCHOOL at Hartshill was founded pursuant to the will of Nathaniel Newton, the son of the Friend of the same name who was contemporary with George Fox. In his will, dated 1730, he bequeaths to the trustees two

tenements at Hartshill and Baxterley, together with a piece of land, from the produce of which a school was to be founded and a schoolmaster appointed, "a discreet and grave person, and one of a good life and conversation, who shall by the said trustees be adjudged and thought fit for that purpose to be a schoolmaster, to teach children to read the English tongue and to write and cast accounts; and such person shall place in the messuage or tenement at Hartshill." The number of children to be educated was twenty-six, who were to be residents of Hartshill. A commodious school-room was afterwards built, and the schoolmaster being subsequently permitted to take boarders, the school, during the latter part of the past and beginning of the present century, rose to some eminence, under the care of the late excellent Joseph Crosfield.

The trust is continued in its integrity to the present day, and, as previously mentioned, a member of the Society of Friends has again been appointed to have the care of the school, with prospects of usefulness both to the village and the resuscitated meeting.

WIGGINSHILL MEETING.

THE homely little meeting-house at Wigginshill stands about a mile from Water Orton station on the Midland railway. Its site was purchased in 1711, and a meeting-house and cottage adjoining erected. For a hundred years or more a congregation regularly assembled within its walls, probably never numbering more than fifty persons, but early in the present century this number was so reduced that a meeting could no longer be maintained. The early Friends belonging to this meeting were, like most of the others in Warwickshire, engaged in agriculture, and were scattered in several neighbouring parishes. The first mention of a meeting in the vicinity is at Wishaw, about 1670, and soon after a meeting at Coleshill existed. It is likely that one or two similar little gatherings of Friends were held at other places at the same period, and for a short time formed "Wishaw Monthly Meeting," but by the time the meeting-house at Wigginshill was provided, the whole of the Friends in the neighbourhood assembled in it for worship.

The meeting-house was erected in 1724, when a collection, amounting to £40, was

raised in the other meetings in the county towards the expense, the Friends in the neighbourhood supplying the rest. The whole cost was a little more than £100. Some Friends contributed lime, and others timber. Among the money contributors are the names of Knight, Bradford, Summerland, Whitehead, Keatley, Priest, Arnot, and Snape.

The few scanty records of this meeting contain scarcely anything of interest. Like all the other meetings, the care of the poor, the sick, and "prisoners for truth's sake," was the chief business of the then particular meetings.

In 1737 the meeting was evidently declining in numbers. The following solitary minute is interesting, as showing something of its religious condition at that period.

"'Tis agreed that our week-day meetings should be on Fourth-days, the time appointed to be the tenth hour.

"The time aforesaid is observed, and though our meetings are but small, have been very frequently comfortable to the diligent and watchful, which is matter of encouragement to such to be diligent to assemble themselves together to wait upon and worship God, who is mindful of such as seek Him in sincerity of

heart, and has never said to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek ye my face in vain.'"

This meeting-house was closed more than half a century ago, and is now in a very dilapidated condition.

ATHERSTONE MEETING.

THE pleasant little town of Atherstone, within two miles from George Fox's birth-place, has been referred to in a previous chapter. A few persons in this place appear to have joined with Friends in very early days, and were probably connected with Baddesley meeting.

About the year 1729 a small meeting-house was built on a site purchased with money left by John King, the members continuing to form part of Baddesley Preparative Meeting. No records remain relating to this meeting, the numbers of which must always have been very small. The meeting-house was closed about fifty years ago, and is now rented as a workshop.

TAMWORTH MEETING.

THE names of Friends residing in Tamworth are to be found as early as 1670, and a meeting was established there, but no settled meeting was held in the town until early in the following century, and no indication remains of their first place of worship. The existing meeting-house was built on a piece of land bought in 1751.

For upwards of half a century a considerable body of Friends resided in or near Tamworth, many of whom left a good name behind them, as persons of exemplary life and conversation. The settlement of this meeting, however, did not take place until the early zeal of Friends had declined, and it appears never to have had an acknowledged minister within its compass during its entire history. No aggressive action was taken by its members, who increased in wealth and declined in zeal. The younger members, early in this century, left the society, and this, combined with removals and deaths, left the meeting a very small one by 1820. On the decease of the last member, in 1852, the meeting-house was closed, and has since been used success-

sively as a school and an occasional place of worship for other bodies of Christians.

FULLFORD HEATH AND HENLEY MEETING.

FULLFORD HEATH lies in the parish of Tanworth, about nine miles south of Birmingham to the east of the Alcester road. From very scanty records, it is found that a considerable gathering of Friends met in this locality soon after 1680, and that representatives both from Fullford Heath and Henley were regularly appointed to the Quarterly Meeting.

No meeting-house was ever built at Fullford Heath, the meetings being held in the house of Joshua Sargeant for a long series of years. In connection with Henley meeting, the Friends at Fullford Heath formed a distinct monthly meeting, as will be seen from the following minute :—

“At the monthly meeting held at Fullford Heath, 16th of 10th month, 1698, it was then agreed that Fullford Heath and Hendley be from ence joyned in one monthly meeting, and to be duly kept the third Sixth-day in every month, that is, one day at Fullford Heath, and one day at Hendley,—that is, a meeting of business both for men and women.”

A number of poor Friends were connected with this monthly meeting, who appear, however, to have been well cared for, as evinced by liberal collections.

"1698. Ye hard weather and ye late season hath caused some who profess with us to lack of outward good, and Friends as are of ability are desyrd to help these, and E. Snape is desyred to ask for help at ye next quarter meeting."

Sundry minutes at this period also relate to the putting forth of boys as apprentices: one of these is subjoined:—

"1699. It was agreed to that Joshua Sargeant shall take as an apprentice his kinsman, John Sargeant, for the term of seven years, beginning on the 25th of First month, 1699: and this meeting doth agree to give him with the said boy the sum of two pounds and twelve shillings."

Several marriages in this monthly meeting about the year 1700, afford proof of the existence of a considerable body of Friends in the locality at that time.

The last minute relating to marriage before the union of this monthly meeting with that of Warwickshire North, runs thus:—

"At our monthly meeting at Fullford Heath, the 15th day of the 2nd month, 1715, Samuel Hewson and Mary Snape having declared their intention of taking each other in marriage at several monthly meetings, according to the good order of Truth, and now we understanding they have the consent of parents and relations, and also the unity of Friends therein, we therefore think it our places to leave it to their freedom in the fear of the Lord to proceed in marriage when they see meet."

In 1716 a minute of the Quarterly meeting, relating to the junction of this monthly meeting with that of Warwickshire North, is as follows :—

“Friends of Henley and Fullford Heath meeting having not attended the monthly meeting according to agreement, Friends belonging to Birmingham monthly meeting are ordered from this meeting to speak to the said Friends, that they may join that monthly meeting according to the said agreement, and give in the report to the next monthly meeting.”

The union of the two monthly meetings was accomplished in the next quarter, the minute running thus :—

“Pursuant to a minute made last Quarterly meeting, the Friends of Henley and Fullford Heath meetings gave in the account that they are willing and do join with Birmingham monthly meeting, according to their former agreement.”

The meeting at Fullford Heath was discontinued about the year 1727, and this being the year in which a meeting-house at Henley was opened, it appears probable that the larger number of Friends then resided in that particular neighbourhood.*

* “Bill of expenses for putting the meeting-house in order, ninth month,

1735.

John London's bill for boards	0	14	2
For Nails	0	2	2½
For a Calf's Skin.....	0	1	0
17 yards Matting, at 6d, and carriage.....	0	8	9
Lime and Glue to wash it	0	0	8
George Pool, for doing it	0	1	4

£1 8 1½”

HENLEY-IN-ARDEN is a small market town, twelve miles from Birmingham, on the Stratford road. A meeting of Friends was held here before 1689, and is referred to in a previous chapter. Among the names of members of these two meetings occur those of Sargeant, Snape, Fowler, Allen, Lucas, Lort, Astley, Field, and Baker. Towards the close of the century, the meeting at Henley experienced the same sorrowful decline in numbers as all the country meetings in Warwickshire North. The meeting was finally discontinued early in this century, and the meeting-house, which had been converted into a cottage, was sold about twenty years ago.

In 1716, and for a few years after, a meeting was held in the neighbouring parish of Lapworth, but beyond this fact no further record remains.

CHAPTER VII.

The Middle Monthly Meeting—Coventry Meeting in Hill Street—In Vicar Lane—Number of Friends—Causes of decline—Care of the Poor—Cash Accounts—Warwick Meeting—George Fox in the Market—The Meeting-house and Graveyard—Resting place of William Dewsbury—Occupations of Friends—Fire at Warwick—Sundry Minutes—Reduced Numbers—Meeting at Radford—Harbury Meeting-house—Berkswell—Stratford—Bedworth—Meriden—Balsall Street.

The Middle Monthly Meeting.

VERY soon after the rise of Friends in Warwickshire this meeting was constituted ; but, as in the case of the North Meeting, the separate functions of the preparative and monthly meeting were not very clearly defined during the first fifty years of its existence. In 1715 the Middle Monthly Meeting comprised meetings at Coventry, Warwick, Harbury, Radford-Semele, Meriden, and Bedworth. Later on in the century the three latter were discontinued, and meetings were for a few years held at Stratford, Balsall Street, and Berkswell.

COVENTRY MEETING.

THE visits of George Fox to this ancient city have been referred to in a former chapter,

and we read of "prisoners for the truth's sake in Coventry prison" in the year 1664.

In 1668 the Friends of Coventry purchased a considerable plot of ground in Hill Street, the site of the present burying-place, and on it a meeting-house was erected, or an old building adapted for that purpose until 1698. In that year a piece of ground was purchased in Vicar Lane, nearer the centre of the city, and a meeting-house erected; and as the Society in Coventry considerably increased during the first half of the eighteenth century, additional land was purchased and the meeting-house enlarged in 1742. This building remains very much in its original condition, presenting a sombre and unsightly appearance, both as to its internal and external arrangements.

In 1730 Coventry was the largest meeting in the county, comprising probably from two hundred and fifty to three hundred members, and was long favoured with a lively ministry.* Many of its members were connected with the then staple manufacture of the place, the production of woollen stuffs. At the end of the century this trade began to decline in the

* In the year 1760 the ministers present at a Monthly Meeting at Coventry were as follows: John Adkins, John Irons, Joseph Heath, John Wheeler, Ann White, Elizabeth Lancaster; and of elders—Wm. Gulson, Thomas Allen, Joseph Seymour, Mary Nixon, and Ann Higginson.

city, and several members of Coventry meeting removed with their businesses to the more favoured manufacturing districts of Lancashire, the number of members being thus materially lessened. After the year 1820 they became more rapidly reduced, both in this and the neighbouring meeting of Warwick, necessitating, owing to their weak state, a union, in 1837, with the North Monthly Meeting.*

The records of Coventry Meeting are but scanty, and do not afford much information as to the inner life of the Society.

A few quaintly-written minutes at the end of the seventeenth century may perhaps interest the reader. The first of these probably furnishes the names of the principal householders of Coventry meeting at that time.

"2nd month, 1698. It is ordered by this monthly meeting that Friends belonging to our meeting are to assist travelling Friends† in their journey as it comes in course.

Elizabeth Edwards.	Andrew Roberts.
Moses Merry.	Samuel Croxall.
Mary Gulson.	Christopher Southern.
Stephen Scotton.	John Scotton.
William Townsend.	Andrew Roberts.
Richard Mallet.	Samuel Nutt.
Mary Rushton.	John Trustance.
Samuel Higginson.	Eales Wilkes."
John Brabins.	

* Coventry Meeting now (1872) numbers sixteen members.

† Ministers of the Society.

“1698. At our monthly meeting, held at Coventry, it is agreed unto that Meriden Friends have concluded to come to Coventry to a meeting of worship upon the second first-day in ye month, and likewise it is agreed for Coventry friends to goe to Meriden meeting of worship every fourth first day in every month.”

“1699. Friends are desired to be generous in giving at our next collection for the help of the poore, as there are severall hard cases which call for the care of Friends. And it is to be remembered that they who with chearful ready minds give, lend unto the Lord.”

“2nd month, 1702. At our monthly meeting it is agreed unto that our generall monthly meeting shall begin at the 11th hour, and that it shall be spoke of ye 1st day before.”

“12mo, 1702. It is agreed at our monthly meeting that the meeting at Bedworth shall be on the 1st 1st-day of every month.”

“1702. It is agreed and concluded by this meeting, that the hearse as belongs to our meeting none shall lend to any without hire according as the journey shall be.”

“1708. It is agreed that Mary Gulson shall have the grass of the burying place till the 21st of the first month next, and then to pay 6s. 8d.”

The cash accounts, beginning with 1695, are carefully kept, and give proof that, as in other meetings, the poor were well cared for; the numerous Friends travelling in the ministry also added a considerable item to the meeting's expenses in the cost of provision for their horses, shoeing, and repair of saddles, &c. A few items are as follow :—

		£	s.	d.
1695.	Paid to a poor man	0	1	0
"	Paid to E. Hancock for a coat	0	9	4
"	Paid to E. Hancock for two load of coles	0	4	6
"	Paid for some necessary repairs for travel- ling Friends	0	2	9
"	Paid E. Hancock's rent	2	0	0
"	Paid for 1 strike of rye for Wm. Steel	1	0	0
1697.	Paid to William Steel on his 'prentice's accompt.....	0	2	0
"	Paid to a poor woman	0	4	6
"	Paid for 10 hundred of hay, for Friends' horses, for straw, a shovel and brush and currycomb, and to a Friend	1	8	3
1698.	Paid to Jos. Maddock for one year for cleaning ye meeting-house	0	12	3
1698.	Paid for mending E. Hancock's windows	0	1	8
"	Paid for Friends' horses at severall times...	0	6	9
1700.	Paid for Saml. Chandler's horse one night, and for a bait for a guide	0	1	4
"	Gave to poor man	0	0	6
1702.	For mending the meeting-house	0	1	6
"	Wm. Steel had bread come to 3s. 1d., and in money 9d.	0	3	10
"	Lent Richard Brooks's mother	0	2	6
1703.	For mending the grave yard	1	14	6
1708.	Paid John Johnson half a year's sweeping the meeting-house ..	0	5	0
1711.	Paid for carriage of Wm. Ashton to London	0	10	0
"	Matting for the meeting-house	0	3	0
1712.	Paid to John Little, schoolmaster, a quar- ter's salary	1	5	0
1713.	Paid for mending the formes and windows	0	3	4
1714.	Paid at the quarterly meeting and sent to London for public service	5	0	0
1717.	Paid for two seats and mending two.. ..	1	5	0

Friends in Warwickshire.

125

	£	s.	d.
1718. Paid for Friends' horses and mending the grave yard dore	0	5	2
1719. Towards Thomas Taylor's loss by fire	1	10	0
„ Paid for Friends' horses and acquainting [giving notice] of a meeting	0	5	2
1721. Paid for Friends' horses, for books, letters and schoolmaster coming from London	2	10	6½
1723. Six months—paid nothing!	0	0	0
1725. Paid four poor women 2s. 6d., and horse-hire and carring Margrete Pain to Stony Stratford	0	15	3½
1726. Paid for the dressing of Richard Farmer's legg to the widow Robinson	0	10	0
1727. For acquainting Friends of a meeting ...	0	0	6
1728. Paid to Josiah Forster for a book to write the yearly minutes into	0	2	6
1728. For guide and horse to Hinkley with Widow Hashold	0	2	6
1728. For schooling of Jno. Harris's children ...	0	12	9
1740. Paid Geo. Aires for mopping the meeting-house	0	2	0
1748. Paid for a portal to the meeting-house	5	15	3½
„ Paid for Job Freer's learning	0	7	8

Two charitable trusts exist in connexion with Coventry meeting, entitled Bridget Southeron's Trust and the Exhall Trust.

BRIDGET SOUTHERON'S TRUST.—Two houses in Smithford Street, a room in Vicar Lane, and a house in Bishop Street, Coventry, were left by Bridget Southeron, in 1731, “for the education of poor children of the people called Quakers, or any other inhabitants of Coventry, and providing them with outward clothing of brown coloured stuff.” Also £420, left by William Edwards in 1791, now invested in a mortgage on property at Attleborough, at five per cent. The

income, about £114 a year, is now employed in the payment of two teachers in the Girls' Lancasterian School, and in clothing thirty-five of the scholars. Under Bridget Southeron's will, the trustees are directed that whenever one of them departs this life, the survivors are to choose a successor within the month following.

THE EXHALL TRUST dates from 1727, when freehold land and tenements, at Exhall, were purchased with a legacy left by Robert Astbury, for the relief of the poor of the people called Quakers. The rent, £36 a year, is expended for these purposes by the trustees. When five or more of the trustees have departed this life, the survivors are to convey to themselves and five or more discreet persons of the people called Quakers living in or near the city of Coventry.

WARWICK MEETING.

THE county town of Warwickshire has often been referred to in these pages, as the centre, for more than a century, of a large and useful body of Friends, among whom were, in successive periods, a number of valued and influential ministers of the gospel. From the earliest days of Friends, in Warwick the meeting was gathered from a wide surrounding district, in which, at a later period, some other meetings were formed.*

* In 1690, members of Warwick meeting resided at Leamington Priors, Tachbrook, Budbrook, Lillington, Kenilworth, Radford, Harbury, and Southam.

The meeting held by George Fox in 1655, at a widow's house in Warwick,* is the first record of Friends in Warwick. He was accompanied at that time by John Crook, Amor Stoddart, and Gerard Roberts, who, after much ill usage, rode away towards Dunchurch, George Fox, according to his own account, returning to Warwick. He says :

"When we were quite out of the town I told Friends it was upon me from the Lord that I must go back into it again ; and if any one of them felt any thing upon him from the Lord, he might follow me, and the rest that did not might go on to Dunchurch. So I passed up through the market in the dreadful power of God, declaring the word of life to them, and John Crook followed me. Some struck at me ; but the Lord's power was over them and gave me dominion over all. I showed them their unworthiness of the the name of christians, and the unworthiness of their teachers who had not brought them into more sobriety, and what a shame they were to christianity."

As meetings were held here by George Fox in the following year, 1656, it cannot be doubted that a company had been gathered by this period under the name of Friends. In 1671 some freehold land was purchased "in trust, for the use of the people of God, gathered in the light and spirit of truth out of the world to worship God in spirit and truth, who walk in the fear of God, and are com-

* See page 12.

monly called Quakers." It is probable, as in some other cases, that on this land some buildings stood which were adapted as a meeting-place.

The very first minute in the Warwick records most likely refers to the earliest meeting-house :—

"1686. Att ye monthly meeting in Warwick, 6 day of 11 month, It was agreed upon by Friends that there shall be chosen two or three Friends to have the oversight of the repairing of the house, which are these—George Harris, Thomas Russell, John Banbury.

In 1694 a large part of Warwick was destroyed by fire, which occasioned much loss and distress to the inhabitants. Much suffering was also caused to Friends by this calamity; a collection was made for their relief, not only in this, but in the neighbouring quarterly meetings.

The present meeting-house was built in 1695, the former one having been probably destroyed by the fire of the previous year. A statement of receipts and disbursements in relation to this edifice is extant, and is as follows :—

"The 12th of the 4th month, 1695. An account of ye receipts of moneyes collected towards ye rebuilding of ye meeting-house.

Warwick Meeting	42	11	6
Warwick County.....	30	15	3

Robert Hill's gift.....	1	2	0
Worcester County	22	12	7
Ye 19th of 8th month, received the collection from Oxfordshire, by ye hands of Samuel Hains, which sum is	19	10	5
"The 12th of ye 4th month, 1693. It ap- pears by the bills brought in to this monthly meeting, which is as followeth, as appears to the satisfaction of ye meeting, being money disbursed towards building of ye meeting-house	113	16	10
George Harris	2	14	0
For rafters	0	8	0
Pd. for all ye formes in ye meeting-house and for ye seat yt publick Friends sitt on, with railing	5	0	0
And for ye benches round ye meeting-house with boardes and the elbow boardes and workmanship	3	10	0
"Ye 20th 12 month, 1695. It doth appear that all the money brought in from War- wick, Worster, and Oxford countys, the totall sum is	117	16	1
"The charge in building the meeting-house, it appears to be in all	116	17	8

Although closely adjoining the High Street, as in many other instances, the meeting-house premises occupy a very retired situation behind a dwelling-house, through a portion of which, only, can entrance be obtained. In the quiet, pretty graveyard behind, lie the remains of many Warwickshire worthies, William Dewsbury being one of these.

Friends in Warwick soon became a numerous and influential body, probably not much inferior in numbers to the meeting at Coventry. More than one-half its members appear, during the whole of the eighteenth century, to have resided in country districts ; most of these were engaged in farming, some cultivated their own freeholds, others were millers, and those resident in the town followed some of the trades usual in country towns.

The following interesting minutes and memorandums occur in the Warwick Preparative Meeting books :—

“ 1686. Friends are desyred to come to our meeting more diligent, and as near half an hour after the ninth hour as they can ; and Tobias Edwards is ordered to speak to Friends on this behalfe.”

“ 1687. Ye 4th of 5th month. Samuel Hopwood and his father were att our meeting, likewise Thomas Raylton and Simon Warner were here, both London friends. They spoke in our meeting with faithful sober words, and preacht the word of life with power, desiryng that nothing should hinder the power and Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ from growing dailly among us. T. R. spoke att large concerning the spreading of the truth, and how it ought to be the care of all faithfull Friends not to stand still with folded arms, but to be zealous for the gathering in of others to the like precious liberty wee have been brought into. S. W. spoke of severall sufferers in this and Coventry prison, how that their minds were stayed on the Lord, and desyred wives and children and relations to wait with patience for the Lord's time of deliverance, which he said he felt was near at

hand. He spake also in both ye meetings, how there was in our midst a spirit yt the Lord was grieved att; and he prayed them to whom the word apply'd to put away that evil spirit, and to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof.

"Much more did the Lord's faithfull messengers deliver unto us, but this is the chief as can be remembered."

"1698. Paid for making Elizabeth Rudge's grave o 1 o

Paid for Gearsey for her covering o o 7½

Paid for her coffin o 6 o

"1699. Paid for bread which George Hands had o 13 7

"1699. It is agreed and concluded by this meeting that the children of George Hands, when they are fitt to be putt forth to service, that Friends are to take care to place them amongst Friends.

"1700. Paid to Ann Harris, for sack and beer and biskett, for travelling Friends..... o 4 o

"1700. It was agreed yt we should have a partickler monthly meeting among ourselves the 5 day next before the generall monthly meeting."

"1707. Gave to Abraham Jagard, of Church Wootton, uppon account of his mother being an object of pittie o 6 o

"1707. Paid to Willam Berry what he paid for ye horses meate of John Pryer and Isaac Pennington, and the horses meat of yt Friend yt came along with them for their guide to Warwick, put up at the signe of the Swan o 4 2

"1708. Paid to Ann Harris, for wine..... o 1 3

"1708. Paid to Nathaniel Allin for his horses hire and his exps. in his jurney, he being apptd. by ye meeting to go along with William Fallowfield to Birmingham o 3 10

"1708. Paid to the Widow Harris what she laid out for wine o 1 6½

"1708. At our preparative meeting held at Warwick ye 26 of 12mo., then paid to Richard King, for making the horse-block att the back door of Ann Harris's house by Tobias Edwards, and he is desired to take a receat o 6 o

"1709. The accounts belonging to Friends being to be cast up before the next preparative meeting, it is agreed that they shall be cast up publickly in the meeting-house on a meeting day, that all that pay to the collection may know how the money is disbursed ; also another Friend is to be chosen before the next preparative meeting to be in Tobias Edwards' place, who is the cash keeper at present."

"Paid for the horses meat of Thomas Willson, of Kendal, in Westmoreland, at ye Swan o 1 5

"Ye above said friend spake of a day of tryall that would certainly come upon this nation, and exhorted Friends to get into a solid weighty spirit, that they might be prepared to stand fast in their faith in the day of tryall, and signifying all that were not faithfull to truth would be as chaff, driven away by ye fann or stormy wind."

"1709. Paid for a horse hire and a man to go along with Mary Truman from hence to Eatington (she lives at Caln, in Wiltshire), she being sent for to her husband, he lying sick, she wanted assistance on her journey..... o 3 11

"1709. Given to William Foulkes, as a token of our love o 5 o

"1709. Given to Rennils's, being penniless o 6 o

"1710. Paid for a new table, all hart of oak, with a drawer, that is bought for the service of the meeting, and is to be kept in the meeting-house o 8 6

"1710. This meeting having before dealt in private with the undernamed, have ordered Abraham King and Ann

Wibling, the daughter of Joseph Wibling, of Guy's Cliff, both of them to come before this meeting to deal with them concerning their disorderly doings in giving way both of them to joyn themselves in marriage with persons yt are not friends."

"1710. Paid to Richard Williams, joyner, for making the seat as goes from one end of the meeting-house to the other end, he finding all ye stuff; only that part which was the place for publick friends before both bottom and top he used in the work 3 4 2

"Paid for candles, nails and drink, yt the workmen had when ye work was done 0 6 0

These quaint and interesting records cease with 1710. They are mostly in the writing of John Hands, one of the most estimable and prominent worthies of Warwick meeting, who, being convinced in the days of George Fox, became an earnest minister, which station he occupied for the space of sixty-two years.*

There are few minutes of a later date of much interest beyond the sad record of a great falling away from early zeal by the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Society ceased to be aggressive.

"1720. The Friends of Warwick, owing to their numerous poor, may apply to the Quarterly Meeting on this behalf."

"1757. The Friends of Warwick having signified to this meeting that they are over-burdened with poor, may apply to the Quarterly Meeting for relief."

* John Adkins and Elizabeth Lancaster, the last of a numerous line of estimable ministers in Warwick meeting, died respectively in 1766 and 1767.

Many disownments occurred for marrying out of the Society, and some for gross breaches of the moral law. Several families of Friends, also, between 1750 and 1760, emigrated from Warwick to Pennsylvania. The meeting, though much smaller, comprised a considerable body of Friends down to the beginning of the present century ; after which it rapidly diminished, the worshippers in the ancient meeting-house being now reduced to the "two or three."

HARBURY MEETING.

THE village of Harbury, about six miles from the modern town of Leamington, is situated in a fine agricultural district, out of which several persons were gathered into membership with the Society of Friends as early as 1670.

The first meeting was held at the house of William Harris, at Radford Semele, three miles from Leamington, beginning at the above date, and continuing for upwards of thirty years, until the building of Harbury meeting-house in 1705. For some years after, two monthly meetings in the year continued

to be held "at William Harris his house." This Friend is briefly and simply described as "a lover of his Maker, of Friends, and of good men everywhere; valiant for the truth, and a sufferer for it, and seeking to follow in the footsteps of our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ in all things."

Connected with the meeting at Harbury were Friends resident in the little market town of Southam, and the villages of Ladbroke, Bishop's Ichington, Radford, and Upton. Only a few memorandums remain relating to this meeting, and they are of the briefest character. The first refer to the building of the meeting-house.

"1704. This meeting* unanimously consents to assist Friends of Harborough in building a meeting-house."

"1705. Received of William Berry of ye money yt was collected towards ye building of Harbery meeting-house, being 8s. 6d. left of it."

On the establishment of Harbury meeting, it comprised about a dozen families, in which were included the names of Harris, Lucas, Harwood, Enock, Betts, Franklin, and Wilson. Living in the service of one of these Friends was a young man, respecting whom the following minutes occur, and illustrate the

* Quarterly Meeting Minutes. See ante 59.

interest taken by Friends in that day of the temporal concerns of their members.

"1707. The putting of John Cook into some way of business being spoken to, is left to the consideration of next monthly meeting."

"1708. The setting of John Cook to school for one month to learn arithmetick being had in consideration, this meeting leaves the same to the care of Harbury Friends."

The other minutes refer wholly to the relief of the poor.

"1708. William Smith [of Harbury] made complaint that the money allowed by the three meetings for relief of his mother-in-law is not sufficient, the consideration whereof is referred to the next monthly meeting."

"1708. Agreed to pay William Smith, for the maintenance of his mother-in-law, six shillings every month, in this proportion, viz., Warwick 2 shills 1d., Coventry 2 shills 1d., Harbury 1 shill 4d., and Samuel Harbart 6d."

The meeting at Harbury ceased to exist about 1795, and the meeting-house was sold forty years later.

BERKSWELL MEETING.

THIS meeting appears to have been formed by the union of Friends, who for a time held meetings at Kenilworth, Balsall Street, and Meriden. A small meeting-house was built in the village of Berkswell, or a cottage adapted for the purpose, about the year

1750, for their joint convenience. The meeting probably never numbered more than ten or twelve householders, and even these became much fewer twenty years later. The Clarks, of Balsall Street, were amongst the earliest supporters of the little meeting of Berkswell.

The two following minutes relate to this meeting-house :—

“ 1758. William Gulson laid before this meeting the necessity of making some alteration in the meeting-house at Berkswell, and this meeting recommends to each particular meeting a subscription to answer that service.”

“ 1761. The Friends of Warwick having subscribed for defraying the charges of Christopher Middleton’s journey to Ireland, and excused the Friends of Coventry, is the reason why they only subscribe one pound two shillings and sixpence towards the alterations of Berkswell meeting-house. Berkswell Friends have subscribed one guinea. The rest to be paid by Coventry Friends.”*

“ 1781. It being long since any Friend from Berkswell attended this meeting, we appoint John Seymour, Joseph Seymour, Joseph Heath, John Cash, and Samuel Nevitt, to visit that meeting and enquire if they attend their meetings on first and on week-days.”

“ 1781. The Friends appointed visited Berkswell meeting, and report that their week-day meeting is dropp’d, and that their first-day meetings are not well attended.”

The meeting was closed in 1783, by the following minute :—

“ The Friends of Berkswell Meeting having declined meet-

* See ante, p. 47.

ing together there, and this meeting deeming it most conducive to the preservation of the reputation of the Society to discontinue or drop the said meeting, it accedes thereto, and Friends are desired to acquaint the Quarterly Meeting therewith."

For thirty years or more after, a meeting was held once a year at Berkswell, or an occasional public meeting by a Friend travelling with certificate.

The meeting-house was in a very dilapidated condition in 1840, and in the following year it was sold by direction of the Coventry Preparative Meeting.

KENILWORTH MEETING.

Of the existence at one time of a meeting at Kenilworth there are proofs in a few scattered minutes. In 1713, some Friends at "Kelinworth" are mentioned. No further reference to this place occurs until 1733, when a minute of the Middle Monthly Meeting records that—

"Richard Goodall, at the request of Friends, hath taken a place in Kenellworth convenient to have a meeting in, and it is left to the consideration of the next Monthly Meeting whether it shall be recorded or not, and the rent and seats paid for by the Monthly Meeting."

"1733. Paid Richard Goodall twelve shillings and sixpence for seats at Kelingworth meeting-house."

"1733. Paid to Richard Overton five shillings, which he disbursed for recording the meeting-house at Kilingsworth, the copy of which record is in Richard Goodall's hand."

This meeting-house, so registered, was doubtless of very small dimensions, and continued until the establishment of Berkswell meeting as before mentioned.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON MEETING.

No regular meeting-house was ever erected in this place, but in 1704 mention is made of "Stratford Meeting." No further minutes appear until 1723, when the meeting was held once a month. It was probably resuscitated some years later by the removal of other Friends into the town, on whose behalf the accompanying minute was made.

"1731. There being a motion made at this meeting about procuring a suitable place for worship at Stratford, and a likely place being in view, this meeting appoints Richard Overton and Joseph Allen to use what steps they can towards procuring the same, and bring in a report to the next meeting what progress they have made therein."

A suitable place being found, the Monthly Meeting appealed to the Quarterly Meeting "for help in providing stairs, seats, and making the place more commodious;" and the needful sum being provided, a meeting was held for some years, but was discontinued before 1752.

Of the meetings held at MERIDEN and BEDWORTH in early days, no records of any kind remain, beyond mention of them in the minutes. The little meeting at BALSALL STREET continued from 1740 to 1750, when the meeting-house at Berkswell was erected.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Country Monthly Meeting—Early Minute Book—Care of Poor—Number of Members—Meetings and Meeting-houses of Long Compton Upper Eatington, Brilles, and Radway—Armscot and Shipston-upon-Stour Meetings—George Fox at Armscot, and his imprisonment at Worcester.

The South Monthly Meeting.

THE third monthly meeting established by Friends in Warwickshire is of as ancient foundation as the two others ; its locality is, however, very different. While the North Meeting contained the rapidly-growing town of Birmingham, and the Middle, the flourishing, and in earlier days relatively more important towns of Coventry and Warwick, the South Monthly Meeting embraced no market town in its limits, but comprised for about a century and three quarters four small country meetings, lying at some distance from each other.

No minute book exists of earlier date than 1704, the first page being inscribed as follows: "This book is provided by Friends for a book of records and accounts for this Monthly Meeting, of business relating to the affaires of the church, by these four particular

meetings, viz. : Long Compton, Radway, Upper Eatington, and Brailes."

These minutes and accounts are carefully and neatly kept, in connection with each other, the receipts and disbursements of the funds being entered on the same page with the minutes. The first entry runs thus : " Here followeth an account of ye men Friends' collection money collected for charitable uses and brought into the men's monthly meetings of business, the time when and the place where."

These collections, as in the other meetings, were used chiefly for the relief of the poor, of whom the Monthly Meeting at this period comprised its full share.

" Att ye monthly meeting at Long Compton, ye 12th of 12mo, was given for ye poor, viz., Jonathan Beck, 2s. 6d. ; William Teale, 3s. 6d. ; Timothy Newel, 12d. ; Richard Clark, 12d. ; William Milloway, 8d. ; John Cragg, 6d. ; Mary Vale, 12d."

Similar entries to these occur uninterruptedly for many years, and varied by very few minutes of historical interest. Other memorandums relate to payment " for hay and provender for travelling Friends' horses," and " intentions of marriage laid before the meeting."

As may be supposed, much suffering and

loss was entailed on the members of the South Monthly Meeting, most of whom were agriculturists, by the severe exactions of the clergy and churchwardens, for non-payment of tithes and church-rates.*

Comparing the records of marriages with the other monthly meetings, the number of members comprised in the South Monthly Meeting at the beginning of the eighteenth century may be probably stated at from one hundred and fifty to two hundred.

“1705. Att this meeting it was ordered that Thomas Buller, of Long Compton, doe keep ye accounts of ye men's meeting business for one yeare next ensuing, which when expired each particular meeting is to provide one to keep ye accounts for one yeare, soe oft as it shall come to their turns, viz., from Long Compton to Radway, from Radway to Eatington, from Eatington to Brailes, from Brailes to Long Compton again.”

“1706. At our meeting held for the servis of truth at Upper Eatington, Francis Weston and Mary Allin appearing, declared their intentions of taking each other in marriage ; and this meeting, on consideration, finding nothing to appear to obstruct it, they did freely give their consents that they may apoint a meeting for that end and purpose, if the Lord permit.”

The succeeding minute relates to the Society's application to the legislature, to be relieved from the penal consequences of refusal to take oaths. Much discussion took place in

* See ante page 33.

the body as to the proper form of affirmation to be accepted by Friends generally.

"At a meeting at Radway, a debate was occasioned about the present Solemn Affirmation, being ye 9th day of ye 1st month, 1713, and it was agreed as followeth to send our judgment to the quarterly meeting to be held at Birmingham the 18th of the same month. From our monthly meeting held at Radway to the quarterly meeting held at Birmingham at the time apoynted. These are to sertifie the quarterly meeting that we are not willing that the satisfied Friends shall have liberty to solisit ye government for the renewing of ye present Solemn Affirmation at present, but that our unsatisfied Friends shall have liberty to solicit for an amendment that may bee to the satisfaction of our Friends in generall."

As in other parts of Warwickshire, several families of Friends from this district emigrated to America between 1710 and 1720, helping thus early to reduce the numbers in this, the smallest of the three Warwickshire Monthly Meetings. The following was a usual form of certificate given to the emigrants on their departure:—

"At a meeting at Brailes, a certificate was given to Francis Evets, the 11th day of ye 3rd month, 1713, as followeth: This may sertifie any one it may or shall conserne that our friend Francis Evets, of Long Compton, having laid before us his intentions of transferring himself and family unto Pennsylvania, and desiring a certificate from our monthly meeting, to which hee doth belong, hee is one that hath been in unity with it this severall yeares, and hath been of sober life so far as we have seen, and we desire all Friends to be

kind to him where his lot may be cast, for we wish him well and desire his prosperity in the truth."

Minutes relating to the care of the poor, continue not unfrequently for many following years.

"1722. It is agreed by this meeting that a particular and general collection be made for the relief of Thomas and Sarah Hunt, and brought into the next monthly meeting."

"1722. The aforesaid general collection by each particular meeting is as followeth :—

	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Long Compton.....	4	3
Brailes	1	6
Radway	4	8
Eatington	5	8

The whole 16 1

Following similar records, nothing for a considerable period is recorded of any historical interest, almost the only minutes referring to "intentions of marriage."

In 1739 a copy of a certificate given by the monthly meeting to an esteemed minister is as follows :—

"Whereas, our friend John Beavington hath had a concern upon his mind to go a journey upon ye service of truth, so he desiring a certificate from us, we gave him one, which is as followeth :—

"From our monthly meeting held at Brayls, in the County of Warwick, the 14th 3 month, 1739. To Friends at Bristol or elsewhere in the south parts of ye nation.

"Dear Friends,

"Whereas, our esteemed friend John Beavington of Easington, has intimated to us the concern and pressure of mind he has had to visit Friends in those parts. Now these, according to the good order used among us may certify you that he goes with our concurrence and approbation, having unity with him in his ministry; his life and conversation being such as adorns his doctrine, sober, meek, and inoffensive. So desiring the Lord may be to him mouth and wisdom, tongue and utterance, that he may be able to preach ye gospel boldly in the name of Jesus Christ, which will render his service acceptable to them that hear him, and give him peace and satisfaction in his labour of love, we conclude, your friends and brethren.—Signed in and on behalf of our said meeting,

SAMPSON SIMMS,

TIMMS ARCHER,

JAMES GROVES,

JOHN GRIMES,

ROBERT ASHBY,

TIMOTHY TAYLOR,

JOHN HARRIS,

NICHOLAS HARRIS.

WILLIAM GRIMES.

Delinquent members were patiently borne with, until it became necessary from continued misconduct to disown such.

"1739. Friends having been uneasy at the misconduct of Richard Harrod, and having admonished him, are by this meeting desired to continue their earnest endeavours for his reformation. Jas. Groves in particular is appointed to deal with him."

"1739. Richard Harrod, having been again visited, and Friends having hopes that he will reform, further proceedings in that affair is postponed."

"1739. Friends of this meeting conclude to bear a little longer with Richard Harrod to see if he will reform; so this meeting desireth James Groves and Timms Archer to advise him again."

"1740. A testimony was given forth at this monthly meeting against Richard Harrod for his disorderly practices."

"1740. The Friends of each meeting that are free to collect for the relief of the poor are desired by this meeting to double their collections, the stock being exhausted.

There appear to have been four Friends in the station of minister in the South Monthly Meeting at this period.

"1743. Ann Groves being concerned to visit Friends in London and some other places, requested a certificate of us in order for her journey; and so she being in unity with us we gave her one at our meeting at Brayles, the 12 of 7 month, 1743."

"1744. Our Friend Ann Groves being come off her journey mentioned in ye 12 month last past, returned her certificate, and gave us an agreeable account of ye good appearance of ye prosperity of truth in ye several parts she travelled thro' and the great satisfaction she found in her sd. visit."

"1746. Our Friend John Lawrance having intimated to us his intentions of visiting Friends in the County of Wilts, a certificate was granted him accordingly."

The following minutes relate to various matters of discipline.

"1745. At the request of Eatington Friends, the weekday meeting there is altered from three in the afternoon to ten in the morning on the sixth day of the week."

"1745. This meeting agrees that the collection be enlarged six fold next month."

"1747. The Quarterly Meeting recommending a choice of two Friends in each meeting as overseers, this meeting refers the consideration thereof to our next."

"1747. This meeting appoints John Marshall and Wm. Bevington, of Eatington, James Groves and John Harris, of

Long Compton, John Palmer, of Radway, and Robt. Ashby, of Brails, to be overseers, who, by the authority of that office, are at proper opportunities (either separately, each within the compass of their particular meeting, or jointly, as they shall judge necessary) to visit Friends in their respective families, in order, as occasion offers, to advise, admonish, and assist in any case respecting Truth, and the well-being of society."

"1750. Eatington Friends propos'd by way of request to have two meetings on each 1st day of the week; and this meeting approving thereof, 'twas granted. The time appointed for the sd. meetings to begin, ten and two of the clock."

"1751. It appearing difficult to find one or more Friends in each particular meeting to officiate in the office of overseer, this meeting refers it to the consideration of Friends whether there cannot be found two or more in the mo. meeting that may answer the same end."

"1752. The Friends nominated afresh as overseers are John Marshall, of Eatington, John Palmer, of Radway, Robt. Ashby, of Brails, and John Lawrance and John Smith, for Long Compton."

"1752. Long Compton Friends proposed to this meeting the holding a meeting for worship on a first-day evening, and were left to their liberty."

"1753. We being still burdened with charges on account of the poor, the meeting orders our representatives to the ensuing Quarterly meeting to ask for some further assistance."

"1754. Our representatives to the ensuing Quarterly meeting are desired to renew our request of assistance, and if put off as in time past, are further ordered to acquaint the meeting that we intend to ask no more, but consider of some other means for our redress."

"1754. Our request of assistance of the Quarterly meeting was received according to the order of our last, whereupon it was agreed that the north and middle monthly meetings, each of them advance ten shillings every quarter towards the

relief of Mary Lucas, and six pounds towards what is already contracted."

"1756. Jno. Marshall and Wm. Bevington, who stood nominated as overseers at Upper Easington, being deceased, this meeting appoints John and Jeffery Beavington in their stead."

The laxity of discipline and neglect of week-day meetings previously referred to on the occasion of the visit of the Yearly Meeting's committee to Warwickshire, is evinced by the minutes of this Monthly Meeting equally with those of the other meetings in the county.

"1761. It is desired that Friends of each particular meeting will hold preparative meetings, and appoint who shall attend the monthly meeting."

"1761. It is recommended to Friends at Brailes and Radway to consider the advice about holding a week-day meeting at each place, received by an epistle from the Quarterly Meeting."

"Whereas the week-day meeting at Radway hath for many years been discontinued, this meeting desires it may be revived, which was agreed to be held on the fourth day of the week."

"1762. This meeting concludes that the Friends that are nominated as overseers shall be deemed as elders, there not being a sufficient number amongst us that are free to serve in that office exclusive of them."

"1766. Amongst the several Friends that were appointed to attend the Quarterly Meeting, there was but one attended, therefore Friends are desired to be more diligent for the future."

A considerable number of disownments for "marrying out" of the society took place at

this period in this monthly meeting, tending still further to lessen the then reducing numbers of its members. The following form of minute was adopted in most of these cases, which were evidently ranked as very grave delinquencies.

"1766. Whereas William Gibbs, of Stourton, having taken the liberty to be married by the priest, contrary to our established rules; we therefore no longer have unity with him or own him as a member of our society, until by demonstrations of unfeigned repentance for his outgoings he regain fellowship with us."

"1788. The minute which was considered last month, and had been recommended for a considerable time past, respecting visiting Friends and their families hath been proceeded in and accomplished by our esteemed friends John Cash, Susanna Gaylard, and Hannah Lamley, whose labours of love, under the direction, we trust, of best wisdom, was to us acceptable, having made impression on some of our minds, so that a sense thereof we humbly hope will not be lost, but be as bread cast upon the waters, and the good effects thereof appear after many days."

In 1790 a junction of this monthly meeting with two small neighbouring monthly meetings was effected according to the accompanying minute.

"1790. Pursuant to the recommendation of a committee appointed by the yearly meeting, with several other Friends appointed by the quarterly meetings of Gloucester and Wilts, Worcester and Warwickshires, it is concluded to discontinue

holding this meeting as heretofore, and join Friends of Shipston, Stow, and Campden, and unite into one monthly meeting, the first whereof is appointed to be held at Shipston the 1st 3rd day in the 11th month, to begin at the 10th hour."

"1790. The following Friends being those appointed, shall continue in the station of elders and overseers—Eatington, Jeffery and Bridget Beavington and Martha Beavington; Long Compton, Thomas Harris; Radway, William and Hannah Palmer; Shipston, John Lamley and Mary Gilkes; Campden, Jeffery Beavington."

But little remains worthy of record in connexion with this monthly meeting to the end of the century. Its various meetings probably containing less than half the members than during its first fifty years of existence.

LONG COMPTON MEETING.

THE village of Long Compton is situated in a cheerful hilly district in the extreme South of Warwickshire. The meeting dates from 1670; the first meetings being held in a tenement adapted for the purpose, which, with some land was purchased for £24 15s. The first trustees of this property were Robert Haydon, Richard Buller, Robert Brayne, John Harris, Gervase Harris, Edward Young, Sampson Simms, and Edward Fowler.

An evident increase in the number of Friends had taken place on the renewal of the trust in 1711, when the survivors of the former trustees transferred their trust to "John Bracey, Henry Clark, Sampson Simms the younger, John Simms, Geo. Brayne, William Buller, William Harris, and Joseph Bath, * * * to and for the use of a burying ground, or place of burial for the people called Quakers, inhabiting in and about Long Compton, and the parts adjacent * * * and to and for the use of a meeting house or place for meeting for the said people and their friends to meet in for the worship of God, when and as often as they shall think fit, or so long time at the least as the said people called Quakers and their friends shall be permitted quietly and peaceably to meet and assemble therein, and to bury therein, without any legal molestation, disturbance, or interruption of, by or from the civil magistrate. And from and after such time as the said people called Quakers and their friends shall be hindered, and not suffered to meet and assemble therein, or to bury their dead, for or by reason of any such molestation, disturbance, or interruption by or from the civil magistrate, if that should ever happen (which God forbid), then and from thenceforth

to and for such other use and service as they, the said trustees, shall think fit."

No preparative meeting minutes are in existence to afford any insight into the condition of this meeting, probably for many years the largest in the monthly meeting. The trade of wool combing was extensively carried on in Long Compton early in the eighteenth century, several members of the society being occupied in that calling, and others in the general agricultural pursuits of the district.

Friends in Long Compton evidently declined in numbers after the middle of the eighteenth century, emigration to America being one cause. Meetings were discontinued about 1830, the society having become extinct.

Some years ago the ancient meeting house was disposed of to a private person, but has recently been repurchased.

EATINGTON MEETING.

THE village of Upper Eington, about six miles from Stratford-on-Avon, is situated in a delightful part of Warwickshire, amid charming sylvan uplands. George Fox preached at

Lambcote in this parish in the very early days of the society in South Warwickshire ; * this was in the year 1678, and is probably about the period of the regular establishment of Eatington meeting of Friends.

We find that in 1681, Samuel Lucas, of Upper Eatington, by will devised to trustees a little close, " with the intent that a meeting house for the use of the congregation of the people called Quakers, should on a part of the said ground be built, and that the other part of the said piece of ground should be used as a burying place." On a renewal of the trust in 1710, the following persons were appointed as trustees, Edward Smith, Richard Buller, Samuel Lucas, William Bevington, John Bevington, Richard Lucas, Richard Waring, and John Banbury.

The little meeting house nearly two centuries old, is surrounded by tall trees. It has a quaint doorway and oaken door, and with the pleasant graveyard on one side, is a pleasing and picturesque object. Friends could never have been numerous in the neighbourhood, as evidenced by the smallness of their place of worship, though in early days they may have been double or treble the little company who now form the meeting.

* p 21 ante.

BRAILES MEETING.

THE secluded village of Brailes is on the road from Banbury to Shipston-on-Stour; lying in a pleasant valley, at the foot of a bold range of hills dividing the counties of Warwick and Oxon.

The meeting dates from the year 1678, when some property was purchased for a meeting house and burial ground. The plot of ground was in the first and all subsequent trusts known as Cross Yeat close. The meeting house is very pleasantly situated, and in the twenty years following its erection must have contained a considerable number of worshippers; these were subsequently thinned by emigration to America and by death, until the year 1738, when the following minute of the monthly meeting was made.

“By reason of ye removal of some of the members of Brailes meeting, and the death of some others, that meeting has become very small; it is therefore proposed to hold a meeting there once a month, on the third First-day of the month, and to have the advice of the Quarterly meeting therein.”

The meetings thus appointed continued monthly until 1761, when another minute appoints the meetings to be again held weekly.

“The number of Friends belonging to Brailes meeting

having considerably increased, it is the judgment of several Friends that it would be proper to hold a meeting there every First-day."

Nothing else remains on record of interest connected with this meeting. It continued to be held until about 1854, when it was closed, from there being no Friends left resident in its neighbourhood. It is now used by the Wesleyans.

RADWAY MEETING.

RADWAY is a retired village at the foot of Edge Hill, and about three miles from the small town of Kineton.

A little body of Friends met in this village in very early days of the society's history, probably in a private house, as no mention is made of a meeting house until 1702. In that year some land was purchased for £20, "extending in length, by estimation thirty-four yards, and in breadth fourteen yards, or thereabouts, and north-eastward thereof to the common street or green of Radway." On this land a meeting house was built, the remaining portion serving as a burial ground.

Except in relation to the renewal of trusts,

no memorandums remain relating to the further history of this meeting. Meetings were held here uninterruptedly until about 1850, having been very small for a number of years, when they were discontinued. A few years later the meeting house was sold to a Friend residing in a neighbouring county, whose ancestors had been interred in the burial ground.

ARMSCOT MEETING.

AT ARMSCOT no Friends reside, but for many years a meeting for worship has been held by Friends once in the year, in the ancient meeting house, known as "Armscot General Meeting." It is generally visited on these occasions by several ministers and other Friends of neighbouring counties, and is largely attended by the inhabitants of the surrounding villages.

Armscot is further interesting as being the place from which George Fox was taken, in 1673, on the occasion of his last imprisonment which took place in Worcester gaol. Being at Adderbury, in Oxfordshire, he says in his journal, "We travelled into Worcestershire,

and went to John Halford's, at Armscote, where we had a very large and precious meeting in his barn, the Lord's powerful presence being eminently with us and among us. After the meeting, Friends having most of them gone, as I was sitting in the parlour discoursing with some Friends, Henry Parker, a justice, came into the house, and with him one Rowland Haines, a priest of Hunniton, in Warwickshire. This justice heard of the meeting by means of a woman Friend, who being nurse to a child of his, asked leave of her mistress to go to the meeting to see me; and she, speaking of it to her husband, he and the priest plotted together to come and break it up, and apprehend me. But sitting long at dinner, it being the day on which his child was sprinkled, they did not come till the meeting was over and Friends mostly gone. But though there was no meeting when they came, yet I being in the house, who was the person they aimed at, Henry Parker took me and Thomas Lower for company with me: and though he had nothing to lay to our charge, sent us both to Worcester gaol."

The meeting at SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR comprised until a comparatively recent period a

considerable body of Friends, it is now very small. Those of CAMPDEN and STOW, added to this monthly meeting at the same time with Shipston meeting, have both been discontinued for some years. These meetings being situated in the counties of Worcester and Gloucester do not come within the scope of this work.

CHAPTER IX.

Ministers in Warwickshire—Numerous in the early part of the eighteenth century—First Record—Brief Memoirs—Education in the Society in Warwickshire.

IT has been already mentioned that in the early part of the eighteenth century the ministers of the Society of Friends in Warwickshire formed a numerous body.*

The earliest written testimonies concerning deceased ministers were not generally preserved, either among the Yearly Meeting records or in those of their own Quarterly and Monthly Meetings. The first mention of a deceased minister is to be found in the burial register, and refers to Charles Lloyd, the founder in Birmingham of the respected family of that name, who suffered imprisonment in the principality of Wales, and in his later years removed to that town, where he died in 1698, and is thus honourably referred to :—

“He was a serviceable man in his day and delighted to see truth prosper and grow amongst Friends.”

Many of these memorials to departed worth are very simple, while others follow a more

* See appendix.

eulogistic strain than was the case in a later period, when the phraseology of the society had become much more measured and cautious, though perhaps, on the other hand, less forcible and convincing.

In 1700, there were about twenty recognised ministers in Warwickshire, and, notwithstanding the record of several deaths amongst them, the number in 1725 had increased to twenty-five.

Most of these were persons of marked excellence of character, and much esteemed in their several localities, where they appear to have exercised considerable influence amongst their neighbours. Many of them were diligent gospel labourers, and travelled in the work of the ministry to distant parts of the kingdom. As will be seen in the appendix, almost every meeting, larger or smaller, within the limits of the county, possessed one or more minister in 1730. It is also to be noticed how large a number of the Warwickshire ministers died between 1730 and 1750, and the ripe age to which many of them attained.

In the three larger meetings resided twenty ministers : eight in Birmingham, five in Coventry, and seven in Warwick ; comprising thirteen men and seven women. Among

the other ministers in Birmingham, in 1730, would have been seen the venerable Luke Breedon, then in his seventy-first year, who survived ten years longer, and of whom it was said, "He suffered much in his younger days in the cause of truth. He was a man who owned but little of this world's goods, but was 'rich in faith.' He had a lively gift in the ministry, which he exercised with boldness and fervour, bringing home with witnessing power the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to the hearts of his hearers. He was a servicable man, too, among his neighbours, often seeking out the poor and ignorant, and supplying their wants both in temporals and spirituals."

On the same seat would sit Jonathan Freeth, a Friend about the same age. It is recorded of him, "That he was religiously inclined from his youth, and diligently attended the meeting at Birmingham,* even in times of persecution, when the doors of the meeting house were closed against Friends, and they were obliged to meet in the highway. He was a man of a very thankful spirit, often advising his friends to dwell much in the love of God. He was a tender and loving father, concerned

* He resided at Harborne.

for the good education of his children in the way of truth and righteousness, and his labours, through a blessing, had a good effect, two of his sons having received a gift in the ministry." He was a minister for forty-three years, and died at the age of seventy-seven, in 1738. His son Jonathan was also a minister in Birmingham at the time of his father's death. The other son, Joseph, occupied a similar position in Coventry meeting, and died a few years after his father. Joseph Freeth was evidently a gifted man. "He settled in Coventry about his twenty-fifth year, when it pleased the Lord to afford him a fresh visitation of His love, so that he became very diligent in looking for the way of life and salvation, and by yielding obedience through faith, to the gift of God, he was made partaker of life and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ. In his ministry, he preached the gospel with zeal and fervency, and he was plain, sound, and powerful, and his supplications were frequent, earnest, and fervent. He was of excellent service in the settling the affairs of the church, earnestly desiring that Friends might be influenced by no other feeling than love and zeal for the truth. He was often concerned to visit both

Friends and others in affliction, to their great comfort and consolation, for he was well taught in the things of God relating to the soul." He died in 1742.

Of Joshua Sargeant it is said, "He was a servant of Jesus Christ, and a faithful preacher of the gospel at Fulford Heath, and at Birmingham. He was a free, open-hearted man, generous and kind and ready to assist those in want, and, like a good Christian, to help those under affliction."

Henry Bradford,* almost the last of the same group of Birmingham worthies, died in 1771. He was one of the most energetic members of the society in Warwickshire for a long period. In every concern for its welfare he was always foremost; he was clerk of his own monthly meeting, and of the quarterly meeting, for many years, and a constant attender of the yearly meetings. He frequently travelled in the ministry to distant counties. He was of so generous and charitable a disposition that he left but little behind him at his decease. His excellent wife Elizabeth, who died before her husband, was also an esteemed minister. "He was a man of

* Bradford Street, in which he resided in his latter years, is named after him.

superior ability in public matters, tempered with a meek and Christian spirit, which constantly and conspicuously appeared in his life and conversation. His ministry was lively, and instructive, tending to invite his hearers to love and gratitude to the bounteous author of all our mercies, and that it might be the concern and delight of all to be exercised therein both day and night." He was interred at Wigginshill, the place of his birth.

Samuel Overton, one of the Warwick ministers, was born at Tachbrook, in the year 1688, his parents having united themselves to the then newly-gathered Society of Friends. He was educated "in the way of Truth," and appears also, with a good natural ability, to have acquired considerable school learning. Being the eldest son, he succeeded his father on a considerable freehold farm, called Grove-field in the parish of Hampton Lucy, near Warwick, in the cultivation of which he exercised much skill, to considerable pecuniary advantage, so as to be spoken of as a person of "copious affluence, and died in considerable circumstances," notwithstanding his having creditably brought up a family of seven children.

"In his youth he received a visitation from

on high," to which he was obedient, and was led on through various experiences, by the hand of the Lord, until about the year 1695, when he felt himself gifted with a commission to preach the gospel, and in this service he was zealous and faithful almost to the day of his death."

Samuel Overton had "an excellent gift in the ministry, sound in doctrine and mighty in scripture, zealous for spreading the truth, travelling much in the ministry," in various parts of England and Wales. He very frequently attended the yearly meetings in London, in which his wise and ripe judgment was valued, as it was equally so in the meetings for discipline in his own county.

Samuel Overton is further spoken of as one who "not only in doctrine zealously and repeatedly recommended a holy and circumspect life, but was a lively example in his own conversation and conduct; and that he was also a man of eminently meek spirit, and much loved in his own household. He was kind and liberal to the poor, and his hospitality to his friends and to others was proverbial."

As an illustration of Samuel Overton's ministry, another extract, in addition to one in a former page, may be given from the pen of

his venerable friend and contemporary in the work of the ministry, John Hands.*

"And now, ye of the younger sort, my heart goes forth in the pure life and love of our Lord Jesus Christ on your account. 'Begin not to say, we have Abraham to our father!' Begin not to say, 'we have been brought up in the way of truth, and our fathers suffered and died for the truth; we are free men, we are not in bondage.' Yea, but hath the truth made ye free? Have ye followed Him who is the way, the truth, and the life. Doth He who suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem, rule in your hearts by the power of His Spirit? He hath knocked! have ye opened? Do ye believe to the salvation of your souls?

"O seek ye, dearly-beloved ones, to be coming up in the power and life of true religion. Let not these days of ease seduce your souls from the way of peace and holiness. Now Paul saith, 'Covet ye best gifts,' and, I pray ye, follow this advice. O come up in the truth, that ye may be a faithful seed and witnesses for God in this crooked generation. Square ye your lives and conversations after the pattern shewed us by our blessed Master, Christ.

"But sorrow hath oft times been my portion in witnessing in our county, and in the nation, how many of late hath been called to their heavenly rest, who have been faithful public witnesses of the truth in their generation, and how few are coming up in the same holy power to fill their places. Yet is the Lord and His power the same now as when He first gathered us to be a people. Wait then, young people under the everlasting life and power of the Lord, and know that under the cross alone can ye find pardon, peace, light, and life. So shall ye, as ye thus yield, grow up a faithful seed to carry on the Lord's work in the earth, and sound it abroad among the people; and each in his own particular to have a care and concern, to know daily the power of Christ to be with

* See ante page 54.

him, and a growing in grace, and in the blessed knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Although Samuel Overton had a lingering illness, he was able to attend meetings for worship, at intervals, nearly to the day of his death, in which he spoke of his speedy removal, and "often appeared very fervently in prayer, that the Lord of the harvest would, out of His abundant goodness, send more labourers thereunto, and desiring that a large measure of spiritual blessing might descend on the rising generation."

Samuel Overton thus "lived and died a faithful servant of Christ and His church." His decease took place on the 23rd 7th mo., 1737, and his remains were attended to their last resting place, at Warwick, by a large concourse of people, so much was he respected, and his departure lamented, by numerous friends and neighbours. He was sixty-nine years of age, and had been engaged in the work of the ministry about forty-three years.

One or two of Samuel Overton's sons emigrated to America, another became a foreign merchant, but the name soon disappeared from among Warwickshire Friends.

John Hands, the worthy contemporary of the last-named Friend, and his senior by

eleven years, and who has several times been mentioned in these pages, was a minister in Warwick for the long period of sixty-two years ; his wife also had a gift in the ministry. "He often spoke to his younger friends of the early days of the society, when nearly all the members of Warwick and Coventry meetings were in prison ; and was very anxious that in a day of liberty they should hold fast to the ever blessed truth for which their forefathers suffered so greatly. He delighted in nothing so much as to see truth prosper and spread in the earth, and friends in unity. His gift in the ministry was not with words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit ; it was large, and plain, and earnest, tending to excite to faithfulness, and to a diligent love and service of Almighty God." John Hands was a fellmonger by trade, but is said to have been "no eager follower of this world's good," and retiring on a very moderate competency, spent all his time in the service of the church. He died in 1739, at the age of eighty-three.

William Hodges, of Coventry, by profession a notary, full of years and honour among his brethren, departed this life about the same period.

He was one "whose company was very acceptable, and his own conduct so watchful and exemplary that he was well qualified to instruct others both in public and private. His conversation was commonly relating to religious subjects, and was instructive and edifying. He was no eager pursuer of the world, having by his industry procured a modest competency, he was therewith cheerfully content."

Among the women ministers, Jane Bristow, of Warwick, deserves a brief notice. She was born in the days of the protectorate, and united with the society in a time of severe persecution, about the year 1675; on this account she suffered much opposition from her father and some other relations. She lived as servant with William Dewsbury for many years, and faithfully managed his business while he was a prisoner, and attended him in his last illness. Her preaching and prayers are described as fervent, "and she mightily desired the Lord's truth might prosper in the hearts of the young, and had a frequent concern to pray to the Almighty for a blessing upon children and children's children of His people." Her memory was long cherished by her survivors with warm affection. She died at the ripe age of eighty-eight, in the year 1742.

Ann Scotton, of Coventry, was the wife of Stephen Scotton, a baker by trade. It is written of her that "she was a tender, affectionate mother, and a sincere friend." That "she had a great love for Friends who travelled in the ministry, and that heart and home were always open to receive them." "She was a woman of good natural understanding, sound in the ministry, weighty and fervent in prayer, steadfast in the faith and doctrines of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and she had experienced the virtue and efficacy of His power. She travelled in the ministry, and was very serviceable in the women's meetings of business, and adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour by a sober and godly conversation among her neighbours, by whom she was well respected." She died in much peace in the year 1739.

The testimony relating to John Bevington, of Easington, who died in 1755, informs us, "that in his early years he began to run in the paths of virtue and righteousness, and, being of a cheerful, active, generous temper, quick of apprehension, and of sound judgment, he became more than ordinarily useful in his generation as a man, as well as, through divine favour, as a Christian and a minister." In his public testimony he was considered sound,

lively, and edifying ; carrying with it an evidencing power, as from one whose lips had been touched by a live coal from the altar. He travelled much in the ministry in England, Scotland, and Ireland.

EDUCATION IN THE 17TH CENTURY.

FROM the foundation of the Society of Friends an earnest care for the education of their youth was manifested. When the school at Waltham Abbey was established, in the days of George Fox, his oft-quoted words prove his own zeal that the children of the society should be duly instructed "in all things civil and useful in creation."

The difficulty in finding schools in which their children might obtain "a guarded education," is often alluded to in the early history of the society, and hence arose the endeavour, in conformity with yearly meeting and other advices, to establish schools in localities in which Friends were numerous, for the instruction of their children.

The first mention of such a school is at Warwick, in 1709, when John Crackenthorpe un-

dertook the education of Friends' children, being allowed the use of the meeting house as a school room. In 1710, on his removal, the following minute was made.

"John Crackenthorpe having laid before this meeting, something of his proposals of removing to Birmingham in order to keep a school there, it's left to the consideration of the next preparative meeting."

He being finally "left at liberty in this matter," several minutes follow relating to obtaining "a suitable house to keep school in," and the meeting also gives its consent that "a suitable schoolmaster should be enquired after, in order to teach school here at Warwick, for Friends' children, and to consider next meeting how to raise money for the encouragement of the same." A month or two after, "James Lennox, of London, being come to this meeting, and accepting of the terms offered, was likewise accepted, and the meeting orders that he should begin the school the 26th of this instant (6th month, 1710), having liberty for the present necessity to teach in the meeting house till further provision be made." These arrangements, however, did not take effect, as in the next month the schoolmaster had not entered into his work, and the following proposals were offered for his consideration.

"First to give him £5 for his encouragement, and for writing in our meetings for business.* Secondly, the meeting will pay for poor Friends' children's schooling. Thirdly, that Friends as are able will pay for the schooling of their own children. Fourthly, Friends will pay him for any particular business they may employ him in. Fifthly, if he thinks to come down, and things do not answer, Friends will pay the charges of his journey from London, &c."

These proposals being finally accepted, James Lennox entered upon his duties, and "agrees to accept 3d. per week for every reader, and if they write, 4d. per week." It does not appear that any other branches of learning were taught, but a house was subsequently taken, and the school continued a number of years.

Although the instruction given was so limited, it is evident that the children of Friends, especially those of the poor, were in advance of their neighbours, for there is abundant proof that previous to the days of Joseph Lancaster, a century later, the greater portion of the children of the poorer classes in England received almost no school education at all.†

The only record of the school at Birming-

* The schoolmaster, as the best scribe, was often employed as clerk in the meetings for discipline, in the early days of the society.

† In the Metropolis, and in Bristol, Colchester, and other large towns, boarding schools for Friends' children of a higher class existed; while the Waltham school, in Essex, taught Latin and some modern languages as early as 1676.

ham is that John Crackenthorpe kept a school in the New Row, and taught "reading, writing, and accompts."*

The minutes of the yearly meeting, from about the year 1700, constantly refer to the need of schools, and a "godly care for the good education of children in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord, in the frequent reading of the holy scriptures, and in sobriety, modesty, and plainness of habit and speech, and the due provision for necessary learning, from which no poor Friends' children may be excluded." In 1713 schools existed at Birmingham, Coventry, and Warwick, as reported to the yearly meeting.

Later in the century the boarding school at Hartshill, conducted by Joseph Crosfield, attained considerable celebrity.

In 1762 a deficiency of schools is referred to, as well as "the neglect of some Friends in not duly putting their children to school," and the excellent Henry Bradford, of Birmingham, proposed the following scheme for the consideration of the quarterly meeting.

"That a committee be formed to visit the various meetings in the county where schools are most wanting. Then look out for proper masters, and if they can find some already qualified so much the better, but if not, to make choice of some

* Ann Street, the site being now destined for the new municipal buildings.

boys, whose natural genius is inclined to learning, and of sober families, and place these out, by the consent of their parents, at suitable schools until they are duly qualified ; so will each county be capable to provide for itself."

This educational difficulty does not appear to have been solved by Henry Bradford's proposition, and it was not until the establishment of Ackworth school, seventeen years later, in 1779, that the question was in some degree set at rest.

In concluding this humble attempt to bring to light some of the early history of Friends in Warwickshire, it will probably not be deemed unsuitable to append an extract from a sermon by William Dewsbury, who has been so frequently referred to in previous pages. It was delivered just after his release from Warwick gaol, and first published in 1694.

"Will you live as the Quakers? Then there must be a resignation of yourselves to the will of God. It was so with the Lord Jesus ; and it is so with every true saint of God : you must be humbled as little children before judgment is taken away and the loving-kindness of God sealed up to your souls. If you seek this work of God, you will find it ; if you seek it

on your beds, in all your business concerns, in all your stations and relations. Then no entanglements shall draw away the heart from serving God, and seeking His glory ; and even in trouble there will be no whining and complaining and crying out, but a praising and a blessing God, and, as Paul said, in everything a giving thanks.

O, I beseech you people, for the Lord's sake wait for Christ, for His light to guide you ; learn of Him to be meek and lowly. O, make room for Him, make room in your hearts. He loveth to dwell with the poor, the humble, the contrite. Now, my friends, there is not another mediator besides Jesus Christ : it is He alone that can reconcile us to God, and we must be found in Him if we will have acceptance with God. O wait for His power in your meetings, that you may be able to rejoice with joy unspeakable in God your Saviour. This is the true faith ; the apostles faith ; and of the people of God the world over ! This is the faith of the Quakers, in spite of the defamations and lies of our adversaries ; this is the faith that overcometh the world."

APPENDIX.

MINISTERS IN WARWICKSHIRE QUARTERLY MEETING DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. *

		Died.	Age.	Years in Ministry.
William Cockbill		1707		
Ann Lloyd	Birmingham	1709		
Sarah Lewis		1715		
Edward Harris	Radway	1719		
Tobias Edwards	Warwick, (a prisoner.)	1719		
William Bevington	Eatington	1721	80	
Richard Evetts	Radway	1722		
Mary Gulson	Coventry	1723	73	30
Joseph Ault	Baddesley	1723		
Ann Sabin	Baddesley	1723		
Francis Bradford	Wigginshill	1727		
Ann Ludford	Baddesley	1730		
William Berry	Warwick	1732		
John Bradford	Wigginshill	1734		
Sion Moor	Warwick	1734		
Daniel Sutton	Birmingham	1735		
Samuel Overton	Warwick	1737	69	43
William Hodges	Coventry	1737	70	11
Jonathan Freeth	Birmingham	1738	77	43
Susannah Allen	Warwick	1739	74	25
John Hands	Warwick	1739	83	62
Ann Scotton	Coventry	1739	68	28

* This cannot be claimed as an entirely complete list, from omissions in minute books, and, in a few cases, some Friends having discontinued the work of the ministry from various causes.

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		Died.	Age.	Years in Ministry.
William Baldwin	Coventry	1740	74	46
Luke Breedon	Birmingham	1740	81	
Joseph Freeth	Coventry	1742	53	25
Jane Briscoe	Warwick	1742	88	65
Elizabeth Hands	Warwick	1743	76	43
Elizabeth Bevington	Eatington	1743	30	7
Joshua Sargeant	Fulford Heath and Birmingham	1745	81	
Robert Watts	Warwick	1747		3
William Enock	Harbury	1748	79	54
Elizabeth Bradford	Birmingham	1750	54	32
John Harris	Coventry	1751		
John Bevington	Eatington	1755	65	40
Eleanor Clark	Balsall Street	1756	51	9
James Lawrance	Long Compton	1757		
Elizabeth Wakeman	Halesowen, (Birmingham)	1759	74	50
Elizabeth Taylor	Baddesley	1760		40
Ann Groves	Long Compton	1761		
Thomas Robinson	Birmingham	1764	89	64
Jonathan Freeth, jun.	Birmingham	1765		
John Hemmings	Brailes	1765		
John Adkins	Warwick	1766	53	27
Elizabeth Lancaster	Warwick	1767	68	16
Ann White	Coventry	1768	66	24
John Irons	Harbury	1769	70	30
Henry Bradford	Birmingham	1771	73	50
Samuel Nevitt	Coventry	1781	48	4
Richard Adkins	Hartshill	1782	62	30
Deborah Harris	Long Compton	1784	80	30
George Boone	Birmingham	1785	55	35
Susanah Boone	Birmingham	1789	58	19
Mary Lloyd	Birmingham (died in the 19th century.)			







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